

# PREGNANCY & HORSE RIDING



The participation of women in equestrian activities during pregnancy raises legal, insurance and other issues, both for the individual rider and the association to which they belong. An awareness of the issues involved is important so that each of the parties can act in a way which will help avoid undesirable outcomes.

Undertaking exercise during pregnancy presents benefits and risks. It is not possible to make any general statement about how much or what type of exercise is suitable or for how long into a pregnancy it should continue. The factors which determine this vary from person to person. It is for this reason that the literature available on this subject invariably recommends these issues be determined by the expectant mother in consultation with her medical advisor.

Australian laws provide protection against discrimination of women on the grounds of pregnancy, however, this in no way reduces an association's or club's duty of care to its members, including those who are pregnant, and the unborn child.

Whilst officials must avoid giving advice they are not qualified to give, they should advise participants that there are possible risks involved and that if they are intending to continue participation during pregnancy, professional medical advice in this regard should be obtained and acted on.

In the event a person refuses to seek medical advice, or continues involvement despite advice to the contrary, the club may need to counsel the person or ultimately consider seeking legal advice.

The safety of all participants should be a priority for any club and proper enforcement of the rules of the sport can assist in this regard.

Some forms of sport and exercise present a greater risk of injury than others. Horse riding features among those of high risk. This means it is even more important that the individual's right to participate, is weighed against the potential risks, and medical advice sought.

Overall, there are both risks and benefits for women involving themselves in sport or exercise during pregnancy. It is up to each person, in conjunction with their club or association, to determine what is suitable for them in consultation with their medical advisor and based on their own particular circumstances.

For those who are insured under Personal Accident insurance policies, it is important to be aware all policies have exclusions in respect of pregnancy and expectant mothers should read their respective Product Disclosure Statements for full details.

There are many web sites which offer information and commentary on this topic. The Australian Sports Commission website contains an article titled Pregnancy in Sport – Guidelines for the Australian Sporting Industry. As the title indicates, this contains information for the Australian sporting industry. It provides well informed information for any one wishing to learn more about this topic.



The information provided above is intended to be of a general nature and should not be taken as personal legal or medical advice. It is recommended that professional legal or medical advice be sought in respect of any issues which will impact upon a person's decision whether to participate in any form of exercise or sport during pregnancy.