

Infography

# Infographic: Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Pregnancy and Postpartum Guidance

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**Abstract:** Historically, women have participated in elite sports for the past century, yet a perception persists that elite sports are incompatible with motherhood. There is a lack of consensus and sport-specific guidance on the upper limits of exercise during these periods. Arguably, this creates a conservative ambiguity for mothers who were active before pregnancy, potentially resulting in reduced participation during pregnancy and posing challenges for their return to sport postpartum. The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) has taken a proactive step in ensuring that pregnancy is not perceived as a barrier to exercise and has recently published its first pregnancy and postpartum guidance. To enhance awareness and accessibility of the newly published sports-specific guidance, the UCI has developed the following infographic. It is hoped that this guidance will encourage safe participation in the sport of cycling across all levels throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period.

**Keywords:** Cycling, UCI, Pregnancy, Postpartum, Women Athletes, Female Athletes.

## 1. Introduction

Historically, many women have had to choose between having children and their athletic career. Despite mothers competing at elite sport over the past century there remains a perception that elite sport is incompatible with motherhood. Worldwide, there is remarkable agreement in the general guidance around exercise during pregnancy and the postpartum period (Hayman et al., 2023). However, there is a lack of consensus and sports specific guidance around the upper limits of exercise during pregnancy and the postpartum period (Hayman et al., 2023; Schulz et al., 2023). Arguably, this in turn creates a conservative ambiguity for mothers who were active prior to pregnancy, potentially leading to reduced participation

during pregnancy and challenging their return to sport postpartum.

Cycling as a sport has grown exponentially over the past decade across the spectrum of the sport. Cycling can be used as an active mode of transport, recreational activity, or as a competitive sport. The increase in popularity of cycling can be linked with target investment nationally (Laird, Kelly, Brage & Woodcock, 2018) and internationally (World Health Organisation, 2021) to improve cycling infrastructure and the overall raised profile of female sport. These initiatives have facilitated cycling popularity through improving cycling safety, improvement in cycling networks and cycling accessibility. The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), which is a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC),



is the world governing body for cycling and oversees the regulation of the sport across all levels. Both the UCI and IOC have outlined gender equality and inclusion objectives, which highlight the aim to increase female participation within sport and place an emphasis on sporting longevity.

In line with encouraging continued participation in sport during pregnancy and the postpartum period, there is a need for national governing bodies to publish sports specific policy. Each sport places a unique demand on the exercising mother and baby. The UCI has taken a proactive step in ensuring that pregnancy is not perceived as a barrier to exercise and has recently published its first pregnancy and postpartum guidance (Heron, Bigard & Jones, 2023). This policy is developed in line with best evidence and supports the need for research amongst the pregnant and postpartum cyclist to increase the evidence base behind the upper limits of exercise.

To improve the awareness and accessibility of the new published sports specific guidance, the UCI has developed the following infographic (Figure 1). It is hoped this guidance will encourage safe participation in the sport of cycling across all levels throughout pregnancy the postpartum period. This infographic provides a summary of the pertinent information contained within the guidance associated with sporting participation throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period (Heron, Bigard & Jones, 2023). **Funding:** No funding was utilized to produce this work.

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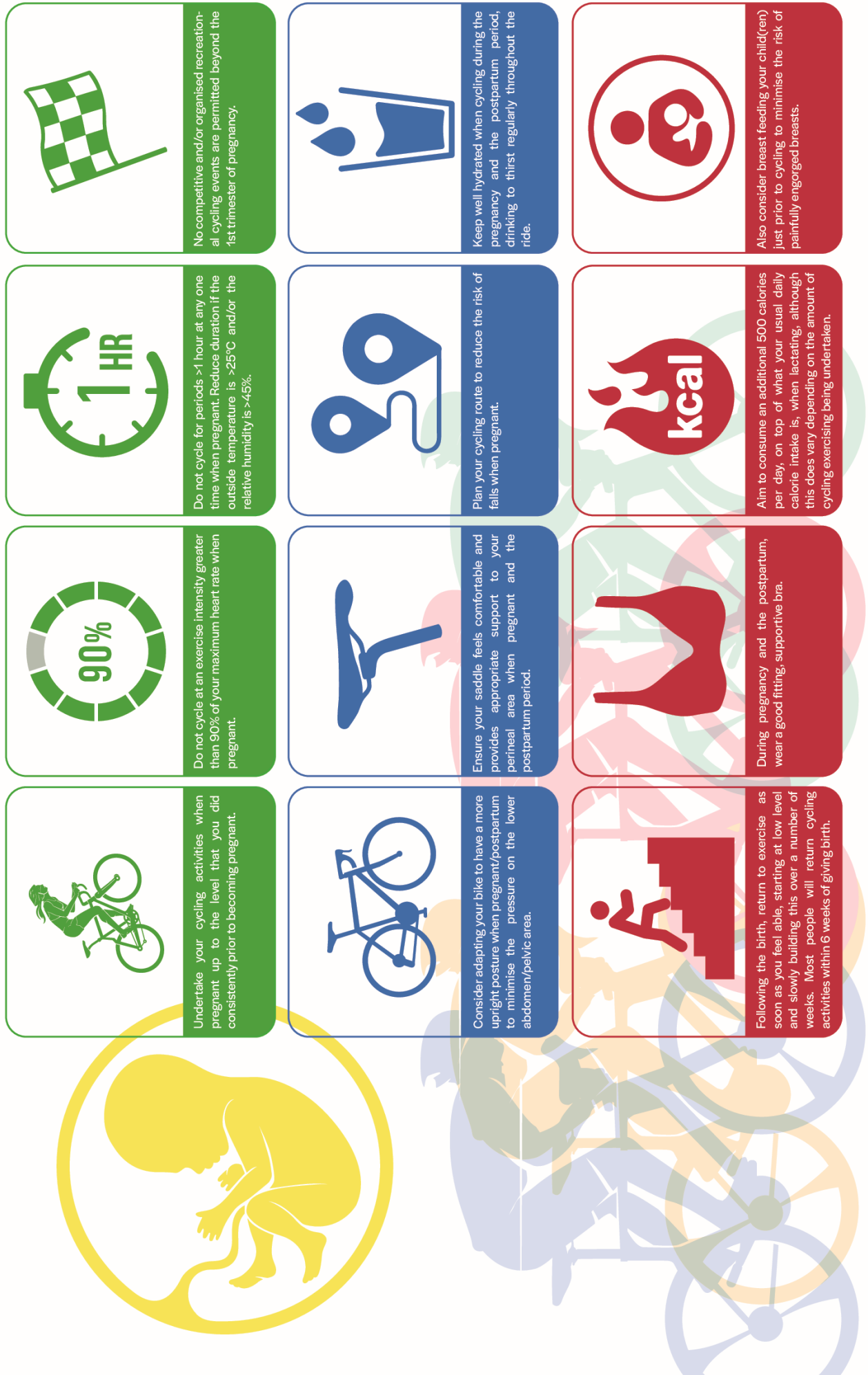


Figure 1. Infographic of Cycling Pregnancy and Postpartum Guidance 2023 (Heron, Bigard & Jones, 2023)