

# FEMALE ATHLETES, HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION, & BONE HEALTH

Female athletes can get placed on hormonal contraception (pill, IUD, implant, etc) for other reasons than birth control, but it's not always the best answer. Below are some common misconceptions around hormonal contraception, periods, and bone health.



## "MOST OF MY TEAMMATES LOSE THEIR PERIOD DURING THE TRACK/XC SEASON SO IT MUST BE NORMAL"

Losing periods during the season is **not** a normal response to training. This is likely a sign of low energy availability (i.e., your fueling/nutrition is not matching your exercise efforts) and should be discussed with your coach or athletic trainer **and** medical provider.



## "I LOST MY PERIOD DURING THE SEASON AND MY DOCTOR WANTS TO PUT ME ON THE PILL"

Wait! This may be a sign that your natural hormones aren't working properly because of low energy availability. This can lead to missed periods and should be evaluated. Other reasons for missed periods (polycystic ovarian syndrome, chronic diseases and pregnancy) should also be explored before starting any hormonal contraception.



## "I HAD A STRESS FRACTURE AND THEN WAS PLACED ON HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION TO 'HELP MY BONES'"

The evidence is inconclusive whether oral contraceptives help improve bone health, especially if an underlying energy deficit isn't first addressed. In fact, the Depo-Provera shot can negatively affect bone health! **Just because your periods are regular while on the pill, doesn't mean your hormones are working optimally to keep your bones healthy.** If you're unsure about your bone health, talk to a medical provider to make sure you're taking the right steps now for optimal bone health throughout your life.

