

CATCH THE ACTION

# YOUR SPORTS

## The Female Athletic Triad

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Have you heard of the female athletic triad? With the temperatures rising and outdoor sports starting, it is important to be aware of this triad, as it can be dangerous if not treated. It is most common in women and girls competing in sports that emphasize leanness or thinness. The female athletic triad is a syndrome of three interrelated parts: energy deficiency, amenorrhea and low bone mass.

### Energy Deficiency

Energy deficiency is defined as an imbalance between the amount of energy consumed from food and the amount of energy expended through exercise. This deficiency can occur with or without disordered eating. Disordered eating includes skipping meals, bingeing/purging, counting calories, food restriction, preoccupation with weight and/or unnecessarily restricting food groups. You are underfueling if you have an energy deficiency. Athletes are often not

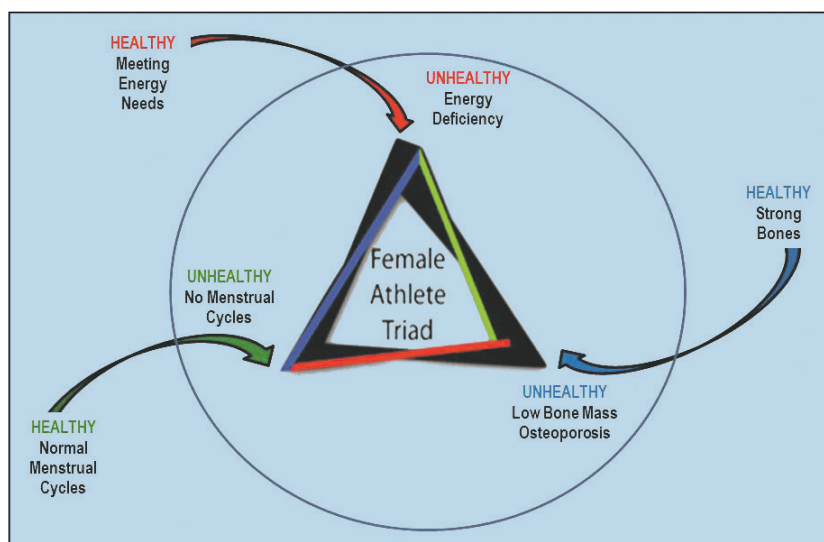
aware of how many calories their bodies need to perform, and as a result they under fuel without knowing it. Under fueling can lead to menstrual problems, weak bones and feeling weak and tired.

### Amenorrhea

Amenorrhea is when there is no menstrual period for at least 3 months. Amenorrhea is interrelated to energy deficiency because adequate energy is needed to maintain normal estrogen production which in turn is needed for normal menstruation. Energy deficiency can also result in irregular periods without amenorrhea. Irregular periods can still have negative impacts on the body. If you are not sure if you are missing periods, try tracking them in your phone or downloading a phone app to help you.

### Low Bone Mass

Low bone density leads to risks for fractures, osteoporosis and increased injuries. Decreased energy intake leads to a decreased intake of important bone building nutrients including calcium



and vitamin D. We discussed that adequate energy production is needed to maintain normal estrogen production. Normal estrogen production is also necessary to build strong bones.

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The female athletic triad is common for teenagers, and the teenage years are important bone building years. Learning how to have a healthy relationship with food is necessary to prevent the triad. It is also important to recognize the signs and symptoms of the triad and know when to get medical help. Registered Dietitians are able to help you realize if you are meeting your calorie needs. Get ahead of the triad as soon as possible.

Medical attention is necessary even if just one of these components is present.

*Linzy Ziegelbaum, MS, RD, CDN is a Registered Dietitian with a private practice on Long Island. Her practice, LNZ Nutrition, LLC specializes in sports nutrition, weight management and food allergies. Linzy has worked with intramural to elite athletes to help them maximize their performance through diet. Follow her blog <https://lnznutrition.com/blog-media/> and instagram page LNZnutrition for more nutrition tips and product finds, and visit her website [LNZnutrition.com](http://LNZnutrition.com) to learn more about her and her services.*

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