



HOW TO TRAIN BASED ON YOUR CYCLE

Do you ever feel at certain times of the month that the last thing you want to do is head to the gym? Women have their own physiological needs which should be considered when exercising. One of the more obvious considerations is the menstrual cycle.

Where you are in your cycle can determine your gym routine and matching your cycle to your workouts will allow you to make the most out of your exercise. There are four distinct phases to your menstrual cycle, the follicular phase, the ovulatory phase, the luteal phase and the menstrual phase.

During these phases the type of exercise you do and the intensity in which you do it should in fact differ- an actual reason why you don't want to workout one week but will happily run a 10K the next.

THE FOLLICULAR PHASE

The follicular phase lasts for around 7 to 10 days after your period. Hormones will be at a lower level, leaving you with higher energy levels.

This means that **cardio and gym classes** are the best options for your body at this stage.

Some studies suggest, resistance training during your follicular phase will result in more strength gains than just training in the luteal phase. Focus on increasing the repetitions, sets, or weight for the exercises in your program.

THE LUTEAL PHASE

After ovulation, your body hits the luteal phase and will last around 10-14 days. During the **first part of this phase** you will still feel your oestrogen and progesterone levels increasing and another surge of testosterone will occur. Workouts that are intense are perfect at this time. Here you should incorporate **heavy strength training** into your workout.

During the **second half** of the luteal phase, oestrogen and progesterone levels will start to decline in the body. This might make you feel a little **more fatigued than normal**, and is the best time to slow down during your workouts.

Walking, yoga or Pilates classes are great at this point.

The OVULATORY PHASE (ovulation)

This phase lasts for around 3-4 days and occurs during the middle of your cycle when your body produces more of the luteinising hormone that triggers the release of the egg. Your body also produces more testosterone and oestrogen at this time, which will put your **energy levels at their peak**.

When going to the gym during these few days you want to plan to push yourself, to really get the most out of this energy burst. HIIT classes come at you!

THE MENSTRUAL PHASE

This is the least favourite part of the menstrual cycle – your period, which can last from three to seven days (sometimes even longer).

The most important thing to do during your period is to **listen to what your body wants**. If you're feeling tired and don't feel like you want to go to the gym then don't. Take this time to follow what your body wants and try taking a walk or a yoga class or even just curl up on the sofa and go to sleep.

When your body is feeling depleted, resting can be the best form of exercise. Recovery and rest are also important for better sleep quality and longer sleep duration as these can help to reduce period related symptoms.