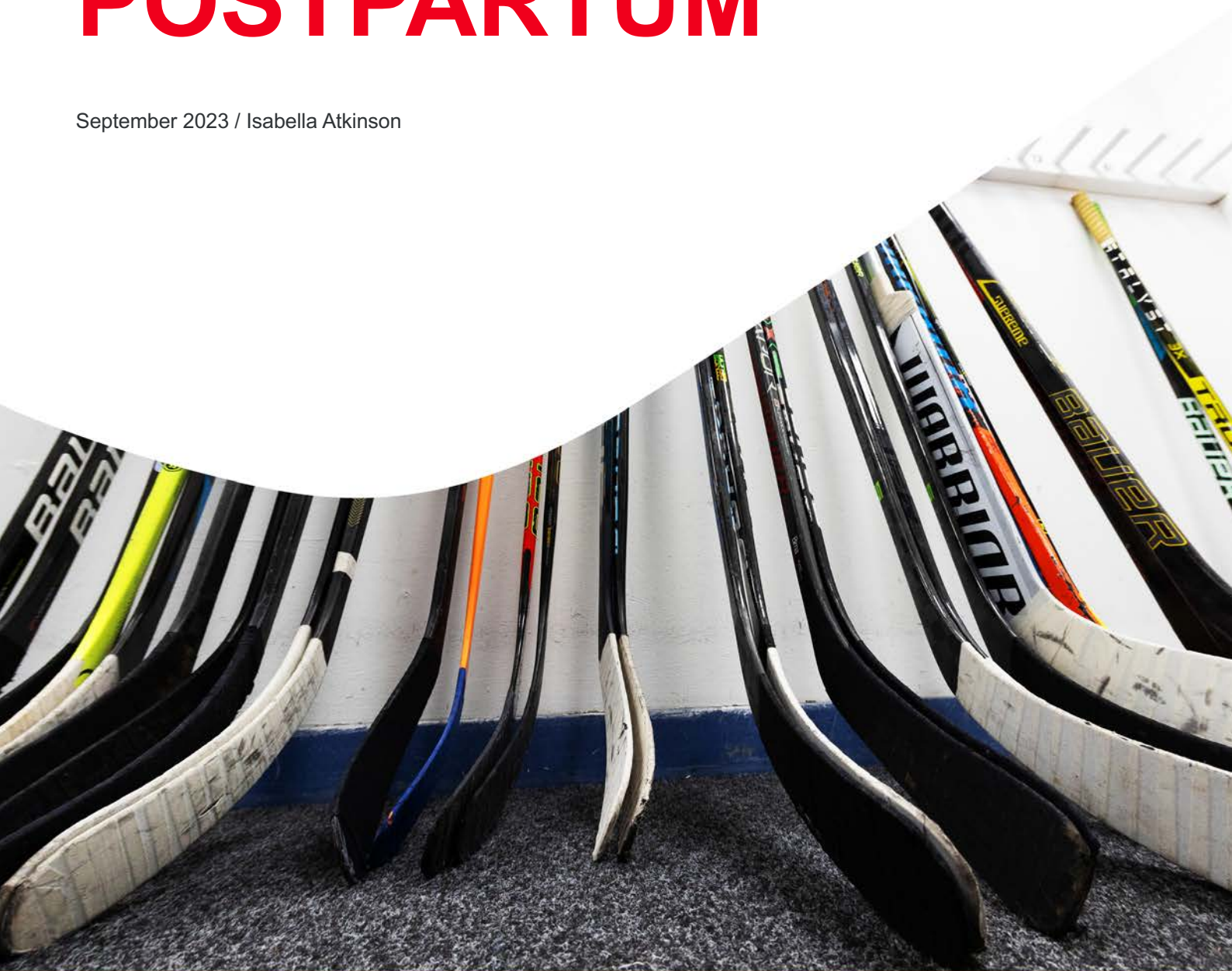


# PREGNANCY AND POSTPARTUM

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## INTRODUCTION

**There is good evidence that there are benefits of aerobic exercise during pregnancy, however this must be balanced with the risk to the unborn baby and the mother.**

Up until 12 to 14 weeks of gestation the uterus is protected by the pelvis. Beyond this point, as the uterus increases in size due the growth of the foetus, it is no longer protected within the pelvis and is therefore more exposed to trauma. From this point, there is an increased risk of harm from either a fall, contact with another player, a puck, contact with the boards or a stick. Therefore, playing ice hockey when pregnant beyond 12 weeks of gestation may cause harm to both the unborn baby and the mother.

An increase in body weight, a shift of the centre of gravity, an increase in the relaxin hormone and progesterone hormones in pregnancy lead to joint instability and therefore to an increased risk of injury. Consequently, contact sports and sports with a high potential of injury are not suitable in pregnancy.

## POLICY

England Ice Hockey (EIH) advises all ice hockey players, and referees to consult with their medical professional at the earliest opportunity and as soon as the pregnancy is confirmed to ensure that they are fit to play up to 12 weeks and that from the 12<sup>th</sup> week of gestation no player or referee should participate in any ice hockey activity.

Elite athletes who continue to train during their pregnancy require sign off from their obstetric professional and may be subject to further risk assessments and guidance.

All pregnant athletes must seek professional advice and be made aware of proper hydration, the additional nutritional requirements of pregnancy and exercise and the dangers of heat stress. Regular pre-natal and obstetric guidance is strongly recommended.

Pregnant athletes aged under 18 are legally under their parents' care and therefore parents need to be included in making the decisions for these players.

Post birth all ladies should attend their 6-week postpartum check, or guidance in line with their health care professional and receive the sign off to return to ice hockey. Athletes must be mindful of their own bodies signals and feel confident and ready to restart training with a gradual approach.

