

## Timelines and expectations:

Four out of five runners reported that they had returned to running when they completed our e-survey, with the average time to return being 12 weeks after birth. However, only around a third of these had returned to their pre-pregnancy level. This will take time and that's ok.

- Leaking – 10%, 26% and 30% of people in our e-survey reported experiencing stress urinary incontinence pre-, during and after pregnancy, respectively - it is common but should not be seen as normal!
- Complications – 60% and 18% of our e-survey respondents reported birth- or postpartum-related complications. These should be monitored and taken into consideration upon return to exercise.
- Tissue healing – the majority occurs in the first 6-12 weeks postpartum so be conscious of this. If you had a caesarean birth, this may relate more to your abdomen, if you had a vaginal birth this may include perineal healing (45% of e-survey respondents suffered perineal tears). However, if you attempted a vaginal birth and ended up having a caesarean delivery, you may be recovering from both.
- Bleeding (lochia) – this may occur post-birth, but if persistent after 8 weeks, this should be a sign to reduce exercise and seek guidance.

- Diastasis rectus abdominis (DRA) – you may experience abdominal separation as a result of your pregnancy and should consult a healthcare professional, if possible, to address this.
- Relative energy deficiency in sport (REDs) and sleep – there will likely be a multitude of reasons you are fatigued after birth, REDs and a lack of sleep may contribute to this. Be mindful of how this may affect your capability and training and make sure you check in with yourself on how you feel before exercising. Key symptoms to be aware of are amenorrhoea, sleep disturbances, compromised psychological well-being, stress fractures and pelvic floor dysfunction.
- Bone health – your bone health may be reduced during the postpartum period due to a number of factors. Be aware of this and gradually return to impact activities within this guide and this will assist in the gradual restoration of your bone health.
- Breastfeeding – common myths exist around breastfeeding and running, and while calorie intake needs to meet the demands of exercise and breastfeeding, this can be done safely.