

Kaia Øvstedal

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## What is the fetal heart rate response to high-intensity interval training during pregnancy?

An experimental study

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## Abstract

**Background:** In the current literature it is established that exercise at moderate intensity during pregnancy is safe and provides several health benefits for the mother and fetus. However, few studies have investigated the health impact and safety of exercise at high intensity, yielding inconclusive results. Fetal heart rate (FHR) is an important outcome when investigating fetal health, as this is one indication of the fetus being well oxygenated. Fetal tachycardia (FHR >160 bpm) can be expected during exercise, as FHR is known to increase during maternal exercise. Fetal bradycardia (FHR <110 bpm) may be associated with conditions such as maternal hypotension, umbilical cord compression and fetal heart abnormalities.

**Objective:** The aim was to examine the FHR response to maternal high-intensity interval training and investigate if FHR response varied based on exercise mode.

**Method:** This was an experimental study on pregnant frequent exercisers and elite athletes during gestational week 26 to 35. Participation included treadmill running and stationary bicycling in five-minute intervals, for up to five intervals. Target intensity was 90% of estimated maximal heart rate and rate of perceived exertion at 17 on Borg's scale. FHR was measured using color Doppler ultrasound after each interval.

**Results:** Among the 18 participants performing treadmill running (17 frequent exercisers and one elite athlete), we observed five cases of fetal bradycardia, two of which were sustained (>3min). Among the 20 participants performing stationary bicycling (17 frequent exercisers and three elite athletes), three cases of fetal bradycardia were observed, two of which were sustained. There were 12 cases of fetal tachycardia during treadmill running, and 16 during stationary bicycling.

**Conclusion:** Most fetuses in well-trained pregnant women demonstrated good tolerance to high-intensity interval training, reaching up to approximately 90% of maximal heart rate and a rate of perceived exertion of 17 on Borg's scale. Treadmill running resulted in higher occurrence of fetal bradycardia compared to stationary bicycling. This distinction could be attributed to consistently higher levels of intensity achieved during this exercise mode.

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# 1. Background

It has been well established in the existing research on physical activity among pregnant women that moderate intensity physical activity is safe and beneficial for healthy, pregnant women without complications or contraindications to exercise (ACOG, 2020c; da Silva et al., 2017; Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2022). It is therefore recommended to start or continue performing low-risk activity forms such as walking, stationary cycling, resistance training and stretching at moderate intensity during pregnancy (ACOG, 2020c). The health benefits of moderate intensity exercise are well documented, and include improvement or maintenance of physical fitness (ACOG, 2020c), higher incidence of vaginal delivery (ACOG, 2020c; Ribeiro et al., 2022) and lower incidence of gestational diabetes (ACOG, 2020c; Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2022) and excessive weight gain (da Silva et al., 2017; Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2022). This gives women who enjoys being physically active the opportunity to confidently continue exercising during their pregnancy. However, only a limited amount of research has been done on the effect of high-intensity exercise during pregnancy (Bø et al., 2018).

There are several reasons why some women may prefer performing exercise at high intensity. For athletes, high-intensity exercise can be important for improving sport-specific qualities, and to maintain or improve their level of physical fitness, to be able to compete at the desired level. Non-athletes may enjoy high-intensity exercise as it is a time-efficient way of exercising to achieve health benefits or to improve physical fitness and reach personal performance-goals (Mattioni Maturana et al., 2021; Ouerghi et al., 2017). High-intensity interval training (HIIT) has also been reported as enjoyable for participants and may therefor help women who experience less enjoyment during other exercise modes to stay active (Anderson et al., 2021). Women wanting to perform high-intensity exercise for any of these reasons, may have the same motivations during pregnancy. In addition, athletes may be motivated to return to sports and competition at their previous level as soon as possible after a pregnancy, for example in time for a big championship or the Olympic games. Therefore, the motivation to exercise at high intensity may also be present during pregnancy for both athletes and non-athletes.

Both for the general adult population and for pregnant women, lack of time has been reported as an important barrier to engage in physical activity, and high intensity exercise can be helpful in overcoming it because of the shorter time needed to reach the general activity recommendations for adults (Duncombe et al., 2009; Reichert et al., 2007; WHO, 2020). However, high-quality studies on high-intensity exercise during pregnancy are lacking, and pregnant women wanting to exercise at high intensity currently only have recommendations based on limited research to follow (Bø et al., 2018). For female athletes, the limited research and recommendations on high-intensity exercise during pregnancy may be a challenge if considering having a baby during their career.

### **1.1 Research gap**

The limited research that exists does not provide a clear answer to whether it is safe for pregnant women to perform high-intensity exercise. Exercising on intensity  $>90\%$  of maximal heart rate ( $HR_{max}$ ) during pregnancy have in one study been found to potentially have concerning effects for the fetus, as it induced fetal bradycardia in the two participants that exceeded this intensity (Salvesen et al., 2012). This research was done on only six participants, but still represents a concern for pregnant women and their health care providers. However, findings from a meta-analysis and systematic review by Beetham et al. (2019) suggest that exercising at high intensity while staying below  $90\%$  of maximal heart rate ( $HR_{max}$ ) is safe during healthy pregnancies and may offer health benefits for mother and fetus. However, there is still a shortage of high-quality studies exploring the impact of high intensity exercise on pregnant women and their fetuses with a significant number of participants. In addition, the inconsistent intensity terminology used in the literature makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the effects of high intensity exercise during pregnancy. More research is needed for exercise professionals, health care providers and health authorities to be able to give evidence-based recommendations for pregnant women wanting to participate in high-intensity exercise.

### **1.2 Aims and research questions**

The objective of this master thesis is to investigate the fetal heart rate (FHR) response to high-intensity maternal exercise. Based on the gap in knowledge, the following research questions have been formulated:



1) What is the FHR response to HIIT on a treadmill and stationary bicycle among pregnant frequent exercisers and elite athletes during gestational week 26-35?

2) Does FHR response to HIIT vary based on exercise mode (treadmill running vs. stationary bicycling)?

## 2. Literature overview

### 2.1 *Physiological changes during pregnancy*

A review of the literature on maternal cardiac adaptations to pregnancy found that maternal resting heart rate (HR) starts to increase during the first trimester, and peaks during the third trimester at 15-25% above pre-pregnancy values. Stroke volume (SV) also increases during pregnancy, rising 20-30% above baseline, but the time course of this increase is uncertain. As a result of increased HR and SV, cardiac output (CO) also increases, and has been shown to increase by at least 30% (Melchiorre et al., 2012). Because of precaution towards maximal intensity exercise during pregnancy, not a lot is known about how pregnancy affects the maximal heart rate ( $HR_{max}$ ). However, a study on 33 pregnant women performing a maximal aerobic exercise test on a bicycle ergometer found  $HR_{max}$  to be four beats per minute lower during pregnancy compared to postpartum control values (Lotgering et al., 1991).

Physiological and morphological changes during pregnancy affects the way pregnant women move and walk (Bo et al., 2016). Pregnancy normally brings a significant weight gain, and women with a normal pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI) are recommended to gain 11,5 to 16 kg (Rasmussen & Yaktine, 2009, p. 254). The growing uterus and enlarged breasts change the center of gravity, causing the women to compensate to avoid falling forward, and results in progressive lordosis (ACOG, 2020c; Bø et al., 2018). Increased lordosis leads to increased anterior flexion of the cervical spine and abduction of the shoulders, which may affect sports performance. The gait also changes during late pregnancy, with decreased step length and gait cycle, and increased double support time and step width. Hip and knee flexion increases during the terminal stance phase, while knee extension, ankle dorsiflexion and plantar flexion decreases. Postural balance is also affected in pregnancy, and pregnant women have a higher risk of being injured by falling (Bo et al., 2016).

The maternal metabolism adapts to ensure sufficient nutrient and glucose delivery to the fetus (Bo et al., 2016). Pregnancy triggers hormonal events that increase maternal blood glucose, decreases liver glycogen storage, elevates liver glucose release, and increases maternal insulin levels. These changes decrease use of glucose in peripheral tissue, leaving more for fetal use (Bo et al., 2016). Because of the growing uterus, the position

of the diaphragm is raised, which decreases the residual volume and expiratory reserve volume (Bo et al., 2016). At the same time, the growing fetus increases the need for oxygen, which results in increased minute ventilation and less oxygen available for aerobic exercise in pregnant women (Nesheim et al., 2015).

## **2.2 Recommendations for physical activity during pregnancy**

Today's guidelines recommends that women with uncomplicated pregnancies are physically active and engage in aerobic and strength-conditioning exercises during pregnancy (ACOG, 2020c; Mottola et al., 2018). Pregnant women should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, over a minimum of three days, but are encouraged to be active every day. For previously active women it is recommended to continue being active throughout pregnancy, although modification might be needed in some activities. For pregnant women that do not meet the guidelines, it is recommended to gradually adjust toward them. Following the guidelines are associated with health benefits for pregnant women and fewer newborn complications (Mottola et al., 2018).

### **2.2.1 Adherence to recommendations**

Despite recommendations to continue or begin exercising during pregnancy, studies have found that women have a lower activity level during pregnancy compared to pre-pregnancy. Nascimento et al. (2015) found that more than half of the women who reported exercising pre-pregnancy, stopped exercising during pregnancy. Only 4.7% - 7.6%, depending on the trimester, performed 150 minutes of aerobic exercise weekly. Duncombe et al. (2009) also found that a lower proportion of the included sample described themselves as regular exercisers during pregnancy compared to pre-pregnancy. The most common reasons for not exercising during pregnancy were feeling unwell, too tired, too busy and exercise was too uncomfortable.

### **2.2.2 Recommendations for athletes**

In 2016 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) assembled an international expert committee to create a comprehensive consensus statement about exercise and pregnancy for athletes (Bø et al., 2018). This resulted in five articles on different aspects of the topic based on existing literature, where part five presents evidence-based recommendations for active women and athletes, and health professionals working with

this group. In the Canadian guidelines, athletes and women who wish to exercise significantly above the general recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise during the week, are not provided any specific recommendations, but are advised to explore the IOC expert committee guidelines and seek supervision from an obstetric care provider (Mottola et al., 2018).

The IOC expert committee recommends avoiding hyperthermia (raising body core temperature above 39 degrees Celsius), especially during the first trimester. Exercising at moderate intensity, about 60-70% of maximal oxygen uptake does not raise body core temperature above this threshold and is therefore considered safe. When exercising, pregnant elite athletes may use rate of perceived exertion (RPE) to evaluate their exercise intensity, as is recommended for the general pregnant population. If the necessary equipment is available, the committee suggest that pregnant athletes use 90% of maximal oxygen uptake as an upper limit of exercise intensity (Bø et al., 2018). However, a basis for this suggestion is not provided, and 90% of HR<sub>max</sub> is more commonly set as an upper limit, based on existing research (Salvesen et al., 2012). The expert committee concluded that there is a significant lack of high-quality evidence on the topic of pregnant elite athletes, especially on the impact of high intensity exercise, and requested more research (Bø et al., 2018).

### ***2.3 Long-term impact of moderate-intensity exercise during pregnancy***

Since limited research has been done on high intensity, most of what is known about exercise during pregnancy comes from research done on moderate and low-intensity exercise. Evidence shows that physical activity for healthy pregnant women without contraindications is safe and promotes health benefits for mother and fetus, without increasing the risk of adverse events (ACOG, 2020c; da Silva et al., 2017; Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2022). The numerous health benefits emphasize the importance of having an extensive understanding of this field.

#### **2.3.1 Gestational diabetes mellitus**

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is diabetes that occurs during pregnancy. It is one of the most common metabolic disorders in pregnancy and is associated with many adverse outcomes, such as higher risk of preeclampsia, macrosomia, birth trauma,

neonatal hypoglycemia and diabetes later in life (ACOG, 2018). A recent literature review found that exercising during pregnancy had a risk reducing effect on GMD in different populations: overweight, obese and previously healthy women (Ribeiro et al., 2022). This is supported by findings in a recent systematic review and in a meta-analysis, but not all included studies found the same beneficial effect (da Silva et al., 2017; Morales-Suárez-Varela et al., 2021).

### **2.3.2 Delivery mode**

The included articles in the review by Ribeiro et al. (2022) on cesarean delivery, vaginal delivery and instrumental delivery showed varying findings. Some of the articles found a significant reduction in cesarean deliveries in the exercise groups, and others found no significant difference between the exercise groups and control groups. These findings were similar to the included research on instrumental delivery, where one meta-analysis found lower prevalence in the exercise group, while two randomized controlled trials (RCT) and two meta-analysis found no significant difference. However, the research on vaginal delivery all found an increase in vaginal births in the exercise groups (Ribeiro et al., 2022).

### **2.3.3 Hypertensive disorders**

Gestational hypertension and preeclampsia are hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, and are among the leading causes of maternal and perinatal mortality in the world (ACOG, 2020a). The literature review by Ribeiro et al. (2022) included articles who found a significant risk reduction of gestational hypertension and preeclampsia among women who exercised during pregnancy, and some that found no significant difference in risk. Da Silva et al. (2017) did meta-analyses of RCTs and cohort studies on the association between exercise interventions in pregnancy and risk of preeclampsia, and no association was observed.

### **2.3.4 Psychological outcomes**

In the review by Ribeiro et al. (2022), exercise during pregnancy was found in several studies to have a significant beneficial effect on prenatal depression, and several studies showed a reduction in symptom severity. Similarly, most of the included research showed a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms. Of the three studies investigating risk of depression in the systematic review by Morales-Suarez-Varela et al. (2021), two

found that performing exercise during pregnancy decreased the risk, while the third did not find sufficient evidence to make the same conclusion.

### **2.3.5 Fetal growth**

Excessive fetal growth usually refers to one of the following definitions: Macrosomia, meaning birth weight > 4000 or 4500 grams independent of gestational age at birth, and large for gestational age (LGA), meaning infants with a birth weight equal to or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for the given gestational age (ACOG, 2020b). Excessive birth weight is associated with an increased likelihood of adverse outcomes for the mother and fetus, such as cesarean section, birth trauma, postpartum hemorrhage and overweight and obesity later in life (ACOG, 2020b). Small for gestational age (SGA) refers to infants with a birth weight lower than the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile for gestational age (ACOG, 2021), while low birth weight (LBW) refers to infants with birth weight <2500g (WHO, 2015, p. 687). SGA infants are predisposed to complications and neonatal death (ACOG, 2021).

In a recent review, most, but not all of the included meta-analyses and systematic reviews found that exercise had a positive impact on excessive fetal growth (Ribeiro et al., 2022). All included studies investigating risk of delivering a LBW or SGA infant found that incidence was not increased with exercise. This is based on research on different intensities, including low, moderate and vigorous intensity. DaSilva et al. (2017) found no effect of physical activity interventions on average birth weight in the included trials. In the systematic review by Morales-Suarez-Varela et al. (2021), none of the included studies observed significant variations in birth weight of the newborn.

### **2.3.6 Maternal weight gain**

The Institute of Medicine has established recommendations for weight gain during pregnancy, dependent on women's BMI prior to pregnancy (Rasmussen & Yaktine, 2009). Weight gain above these recommendations is associated with potentially increased risk of several adverse maternal and fetal outcomes, including cesarean delivery, post-partum weight retention, GDM, LGA infants, macrosomia, and childhood overweight and obesity (Kominiarek & Peaceman, 2017). The literature review by Ribeiro et al. (2022) found reduced gestational weight gain in the groups who exercised compared to control groups. These findings are supported by the systematic review by

Morales-Suarez-Varela et al. (2021) and the meta-analysis performed by Da Silva et al. (2017).

### **2.3.7 Preterm birth and gestational age at birth**

Preterm birth is defined as birth <37 weeks of gestation, and increases the child's risk of adverse health outcomes (Beck et al., 2010). Studies investigating the risk of preterm birth in exercising mothers have shown varying results. Majority of articles reviewed by Ribeiro et al. (2022) found that the risk of preterm birth was increased with exercise. In the meta-analysis of gestational age in trials by Da Silva et al. (2017), no differences were found in gestational age at delivery between the control group and intervention group. The meta-analysis of the 11 included cohort studies, however, found an inverse association between physical activity and the risk of preterm birth.

### **2.3.8 Miscarriage**

The risk of miscarriage among women exercising during pregnancy was assessed by a meta-analysis and a systematic review in the review by Ribeiro et al. (2022), and no significant correlation between physical activity and miscarriage was found.

## **2.4 High-intensity exercise in pregnancy**

### **2.4.1 Terminology and definitions**

Terminology used to describe exercise intensities varies in the literature (Norton et al., 2010). In a position statement by Exercise and Sport Science Australia, vigorous exercise is defined as being between 70% and 90% of  $HR_{max}$  and high intensity as being above 90% of  $HR_{max}$  (Norton et al., 2010, pp. 500-501). However, due to the potential risk of fetal bradycardia at maternal heart rate (MHR) levels above 90% of  $HR_{max}$ , this definition of high intensity is not applicable for the pregnant population (Salvesen et al., 2012). A recent prospective cohort study established MHR target range of 80-90% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  to be defined as high intensity while not exceeding the safety threshold of 90% (Anderson et al., 2021, p. 1553; Salvesen et al., 2012, p. 282). This definition of high intensity is more appropriate during pregnancy, and intensity between 70% and 80% of  $HR_{max}$  can be considered vigorous. The term HIIT refers in this thesis to an exercise session consisting of bouts of high-intensity exercise with rest periods in-between.

#### **2.4.2 Long-term effects of vigorous and high-intensity exercise**

Since there is limited research available on the impacts of high-intensity exercise in pregnancy, this subchapter is based on a systematic review and meta-analysis on the effects of vigorous and high-intensity exercise in the third trimester of pregnancy, supplemented by two reviews on athletes and pregnancy outcomes (Beetham et al., 2019; Wieloch et al., 2022; Wowdzia et al., 2021). The review by Beetham et al. (2019) found no significant difference in maternal weight gain for women who engaged in vigorous exercise, compared to women who did low or moderate-intensity exercise, no exercise or received standard care. However, the included RCTs targeting overweight and obese pregnant women performing vigorous exercise did show a significant reduction in maternal weight gain compared to standard care (Beetham et al., 2019). In a recent systematic review and meta-analysis on participation in preconception competitive sports, four studies found no association between preconception competitive sporting exposure and maternal weight gain during pregnancy in elite athletes (Wowdzia et al., 2021). However, one study found increased odds of excessive weight gain for athletes who participated in competitive sports prior to conception.

A small but significant increase was found in gestational age at delivery of babies of women who engaged in vigorous-intensity exercise compared to those who did low-intensity or no exercise (Beetham et al., 2019). In a scoping review by Wieloch et al. (2022), no differences were found regarding preterm birth in athletes compared to controls. No significant differences were found in birth weight for newborns of mothers who engaged in vigorous physical activity and those who did not, and there was no significant increased risk of having SGA or LBW infants (Beetham et al., 2019). Similarly, no significant differences were found in birthweight between athletes and controls in several of the included articles by Wieloch et al. (2022). Wowdzia et al. (2021) found no association between participation and giving birth to LBW or macrosome (>4000 g) infants.

#### **2.4.3 Acute fetal responses to maternal high-intensity exercise**

Normal FHR is generally assumed to be 110-160 beats per minutes (ACOG, 2010). FHR above normal range is classified as tachycardia, and FHR below normal range is classified as bradycardia. To be regarded as a change in FHR baseline, the abnormal FHR must last for >10 minutes. In this thesis, the terms bradycardia and tachycardia



will refer to FHR outside of normal range regardless of duration. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), both fetal tachycardia and bradycardia require fetal health to be surveilled and evaluated for causes. Fetal bradycardia may be associated with conditions such as maternal hypotension, umbilical cord compression and fetal heart abnormalities. Fetal tachycardia may be associated with maternal infection, increased maternal core temperature, maternal medical disorders or obstetric conditions (ACOG, 2010).

FHR monitoring can be used as one indication of the fetus being well oxygenated, and is therefore an important measurement to assure fetal health (ACOG, 2009). Since bradycardia has been shown to be a potential side effect of high intensity exercise, FHR is an important outcome measure when exploring how high intensity-exercise during pregnancy affects fetal health (Salvesen et al., 2012). Several studies on the acute FHR to maternal exercise have shown small to moderate increases in FHR during or after exercise by 10-30 beats per minute (BPM) over baseline (ACOG, 2020c).

A study of a progressive maximal cycle ergometer protocol performed by 23 active women with uncomplicated pregnancies, resulted in two findings of fetal tachycardia (defined as FHR >160bpm) after maternal exercise (MacPhail et al., 2000). One fetal bradycardia was observed, and the subject was therefore given further medical evaluation, revealing previously undiagnosed fetal growth restriction. In an experimental study conducted by Salvesen et al. (2012), it was discovered that exercising at MHR above 90% of  $HR_{max}$  may have negative impacts on FHR. Among six pregnant athletes, two participants exceeded 90% of  $HR_{max}$  while uterine volume blood flow was below 50%. Both participants' fetuses experienced temporary bradycardia. The study found that FHR remained within the normal range as long as MHR stayed below 90% of  $HR_{max}$ .

Anderson et al. (2021) performed a study on HIIT among 14 healthy, active pregnant women in the second or third trimester. The objective was to evaluate the fetal response to maternal exercise during three rounds of a HIIT circuit consisting of 20 seconds of maximal work and 60 seconds of active rest for six exercises, and two minutes of rest between rounds. The intensity was targeted to be RPE of 15-17 out of 20 on Borgs scale, equivalent to «hard» or «very hard» work, and with the maternal heart rate at 80-

90% of the estimated  $HR_{max}$ . Doppler ultrasound was measured pre- and post-exercise, and normal FHR responses were found throughout the exercise circuit. They also investigated birth outcomes, and found that the babies had normal birth weight, and there were no preterm deliveries, admissions to intensive care or fetal complications. Based on the findings in this study it seems likely that performing HIIT circuits during pregnancy is safe for the fetus. However, the protocol only consisted of 20 consecutive seconds of high-intensity exercise for each interval, and it was only during the last round of the circuit that the participants consistently met the target RPE and HR zones.

### **3. Method**

This thesis is part of the research project “Strong Mama”. As part of this project, an experimental study design was implemented to investigate the fetal responses to HIIT during pregnancy. This thesis investigated the FHR response during treadmill running and stationary bicycling protocols in the 20 first participants of the study. Data was collected from October 2022 to March 2023. Professor Lene A.H. Haakstad at the Department of Sports Medicine at the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences was the project manager and the main supervisor for this thesis. Emilie Mass Dalhaug, PhD candidate at the Department of Sports Medicine at the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences and Birgitte Sanda, PhD, MD, Arendal Gynekologi AS were the co-supervisors for this thesis.

#### **3.1 Ethical considerations**

The project has been approved by the Regional Committee for Medical Research (REK 478976, appendix one to five) and the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD 628051). All participants have received written information about the project and signed informed consent (appendix six) before participating, which they were able to withdraw at any point before, during or after testing. To ensure the safety of the participants and their fetuses, specific end criterias regarding maternal and fetal health were decided prior to testing and are elaborated in the protocol section (3.3). Gynecologist Brigitte Sanda was medically responsible, and all end criteria were decided in collaboration with her. She performed ultrasound assessments and referred women to further examination in case of any findings of clinical concern. All data are non-personally identifiable and kept confidentially according to guidelines.

#### **3.2 Participants and recruitment**

The target population for this study were pregnant frequent exercisers and elite athletes. All participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: being 26-35 weeks of gestation at the time of testing, with a single pregnancy and understand verbal or written Norwegian or English. To be considered a frequent exerciser, participants had to meet the following criteria: performing regular strenuous exercise for fitness and/or competitions ( $\geq 4$  hours/week) for at least 2 years prior to testing, with some high-intensity exercise. To be considered an elite athlete, the participant had to meet the

criteria described in the IOC consensus statement: “A member of any national team or other high-level representative team in any sport organised by a National Sports Federation” (e.g. the elite leagues in team sports such as handball and soccer) (Bo et al., 2016, p. 572). Reasons for exclusion included medical and obstetric contraindications to exercise (ACOG, 2020c; Mottola et al., 2018).

Frequent exercisers were recruited through health care clinics in Oslo and through social media, the University’s website and at gyms and clinics offering pregnancy classes. Elite athletes were recruited in collaboration with Olympiatoppen (Aasne Fenne Hoksrud, Aina Emaus and Anne Froholdt) and through social media. During the course of the project, there have been instances where the number of interested potential participants have exceeded the testing capacity. In these situations, priority has been given to elite athletes. Among frequent exercisers, priority has been given to those who expressed interest earliest, while also meeting the inclusion criteria and being able to participate on days when testing capacity is available.

### **3.3 Protocols and procedures**

The research protocol was first described in the project plan by Haakstad (Haakstad, 2022). The high-intensity exercise and ultrasound procedures are based on the protocol developed by Salvesen et al. (2012), but expanded to include stationary bicycling and resistance exercise. Each participant completed the exercise protocols over two days. On their first day the participants performed treadmill running, and on their second day they performed stationary bicycling and heavy load resistance exercise. Testing was performed in a laboratory at the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences. Ultrasound assessments were performed by the medically responsible gynecologist using GE Voluson E8 and E10, and all other measurements were done by qualified exercise physiologists following a standardized measurement procedure. Before the start of the exercise protocols on both days, the participants had an ultrasound assessment to determine baseline values for FHR and uteroplacental blood flow, and to assure fetal health and wellbeing, including intrauterine growth measurements. On their first day, each participant’s weight, height, blood pressure and skin fold thickness were measured, and they performed two lung function tests: maximal voluntary ventilation and forced vital capacity.

A pilot protocol was carried out on the first ten participants to ensure the safety of high intensity running and cycling during pregnancy, given the limited prior research. The pilot results were promising, leading to adjustments in the primary protocol to closely resemble traditional running and cycling intervals with extended time at high intensity, which was implemented for the last ten participants. Differences between protocols are described in the treadmill running and stationary bicycling sections.

**Target exercise intensity:** Based on previous findings, MHR above 90% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  was used as upper intensity limit during exercise (Salvesen et al., 2012). Estimations from a study by Anderson et al. (2021) were used to determine participants' 90% of  $HR_{max}$ . The estimations differ depending on age and activity level and have been calculated based on HR data from pregnant women (Anderson et al., 2021, p. 1554; Mottola et al., 2006). However, since both the change in  $HR_{max}$  during pregnancy and the upper limit of exercise intensity is based on very limited research, we used Borg's RPE scale as an additional intensity regulation, as is recommended by ACOG and the IOC expert group on exercise and pregnancy in athletes (ACOG, 2020c, p. 182; Bø et al., 2018, p. 1081). RPE at 17, which is considered "very hard", was used as target intensity (Anderson et al., 2021, p. 1553). The intensity was adjusted for each participant to stay at or below this intensity, by adjusting speed or incline on the treadmill, and watt or cadence on the stationary bicycle.

**End criterion:** Fetal tachycardia (FHR >160 bpm) during exercise was acceptable as long as FHR decreased during rest periods, as increased FHR is expected during maternal exercise (ACOG, 2020c, p. 180). However, sustained fetal bradycardia (FHR <110 bpm for >3 min) immediately after one aerobic interval was regarded as an end criterion. If the duration of the bradycardia was unknown, it was regarded as sustained. Sustained FHR >160 bpm after the exercise testing required further health examination. Oxygen saturation was monitored during each interval during the running and cycling exercise using pulse oximetry, and a fall in oxygen saturation below 90% was used as an end criterion. In addition, all exercise tests were terminated if the participant experienced nausea, regular painful contractions, vaginal bleeding, rupture of amniotic membrane, dizziness, headache, chest pain, muscle weakness or dyspnea before exertion. The medically responsible gynecologist made individual evaluations

throughout the testing if other symptoms occurred, and participants were free to end testing at any point, for any reason.

**Treadmill running:** Before exercising, all participants warmed up by running on the treadmill with increasing intensity for ten minutes, with the aim to reach RPE 14 or 15 on Borg's scale at the end of the warmup. The participants ran five-minute intervals, with four-minute breaks. However, break times were expanded if needed to complete all measurements. The treadmill was at a three-degree incline throughout the entire test, but was adjusted if the participant needed a higher or lower incline to reach the preferred intensity due to pain or discomfort.

The participants of the pilot protocol ran three to five submaximal intervals with increasing intensity on a treadmill (Spirit Fitness CT900). For the first interval, intensity was approximately 60% of estimated  $HR_{max}$ , and increased gradually for each interval to reach approximately 90% of  $HR_{max}$  at the last interval. The speed was normally increased by one km/h for each interval but was adjusted if needed to reach the target MHR. During the pilot, reaching 90% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  and/or RPE of 17 on Borg's scale was regarded as an end criterion. The number of intervals needed to reach this intensity decided how many intervals each participant performed.

During the primary protocol, all participants ran five intervals, unless any end criteria's occurred, or the participant decided to stop exercising. The target intensity was approximately 90% of the estimated  $HR_{max}$  and RPE at 17 on Borg's scale at the end of each interval. Participants could continue to exercise if they exceeded this intensity, but intensity was adjusted down. Participants in the primary protocol used a different treadmill due to technical error (Woodway, Weil am Rhein, Germany).

FHR was measured using color Doppler ultrasound during the rest period. During intervals, MHR was measured using a HR monitor (Polar H10) and complimentary chest strap. Participants shifted from the treadmill to a semi-recumbent supine position, where ultrasound assessments and fingertip sampling of capillary blood were performed. Volume of oxygen uptake was measured during the last two minutes of each interval using Oxycon Pro metabolic system (Jaeger, Hochberg, Germany), mouthpiece and a nose-clip (Hans Rudolf Inc.).

**Stationary bicycling:** The stationary bicycling followed the same procedures as treadmill running during both the pilot and the primary protocols, but performed on a stationary bicycle (Lode Excalibur Sport, Lode BV Medical Technology, Groningen, Netherlands). During the pilot, resistance was increased with 20-25W for each interval or adjusted as needed to reach the target MHR. During the primary protocol, watt was adjusted as needed to reach target intensity. Participants were encouraged to keep frequency around 75 rounds per minute. If fatigued legs hindered them in reaching target intensity, participants were allowed to stand up while cycling or cycle at a higher frequency.

**Ultrasound protocol:** Uteroplacental blood flow was examined using color Doppler ultrasound. After each interval, as many measurements as possible was recorded. The right and left uterine arteries and the umbilical artery were measured in a repeated sequence with at least two complete recordings from each vessel within the three-minute interval. Pulsatility index and FHR was assessed in a free loop of the umbilical artery. Umbilical artery PI should not exceed mean value for gestational age  $\pm$  2 standard deviations (SD) after each step of the test. When evaluating fetal wellbeing, the technically best recordings on each side of the uterine artery, the first FHR and first umbilical artery pulsatility index value was used. The final ultrasound measurements were conducted after minimum ten minutes rest or optional cool down. If considered necessary by the gynecologist, this was followed up with an additional ultrasound assessment to ensure fetal wellbeing. If the women experienced painful contractions or in case of abnormal Doppler findings, FHR was monitored by ultrasound assessments for a minimum of 20 minutes.

### **3.4 Statistics**

Microsoft excel version 16.73 was used to calculate descriptive statistics, and data is presented as mean with standard deviation. SPSS version 28 was used to compare FHR data to % of maternal  $HR_{max}$  and RPE on Borg's scale.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Participants

The study population included 17 frequent exercisers and three elite athletes. One of the elite athletes represented a team sport, and two represented individual endurance-based sports. Two participants believed they met the inclusion criteria of being within gestational week 26 to 35 but ultrasound assessments revealed they were at week 25 and 36 at the first day of testing.

*Table 1 Participant characteristics*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Age (years)	31.2	3.7	24.0	42.0
Weeks of gestation	30.4	3.3	25.0	36.0
Measured height (cm)	169.7	6.5	161.0	185.3
Measured weight (kg)	72.9	6.5	62.3	83.7
Weekly exercise (hours)	6.5	3.1	4.0	13.5
Self-reported pre pregnancy weight (kg)	62.8	6.0	54.0	78.0
Calculated pre pregnancy BMI	21.8	1.7	19.1	25.2
Calculated gestational weight gain (kg)	10.4	2.6	5.7	15.7

Note: Weeks of gestation, measured height and measured weight is from the first day of testing. Pre-pregnancy BMI and gestational weight gain is calculated based on measured height and weight from first test day and self-reported pre-pregnancy weight. Elite athletes were asked to state hours of exercise during the last year, which was divided into 52 weeks to determine weekly exercise.



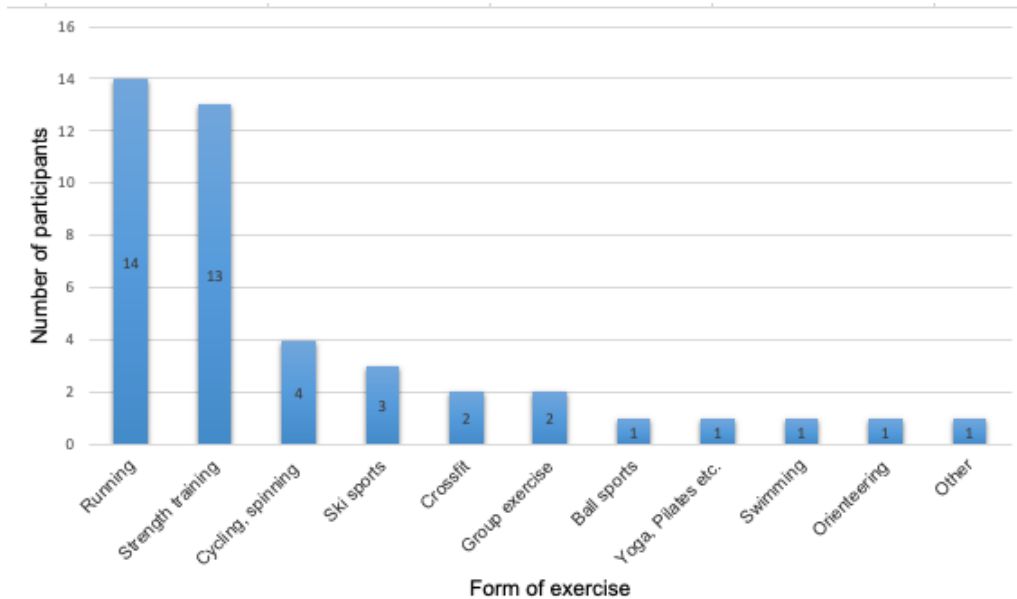


Figure 1 Overview of participants' main forms of exercise.

## 4.2 FHR response to maternal exercise

### 4.2.1 FHR during treadmill running

Of the 20 participants, 18 participated in the treadmill running exercise. Of those, 17 were frequent exercisers and one was an elite athlete. The remaining two participants was not able to run due to pelvic gridle pain. Seven participants completed all five intervals. Three participants decided to stop themselves, one because of pain from a preexisting injury and two chose to not complete all intervals. Three participants were stopped from further participation because of fetal bradycardia, of which two were sustained. One participant experienced fetal tachycardia that persisted for more than five minutes. As a precautionary measure, the medically responsible gynecologist decided to stop further participation. Additionally, four participants reached the upper limit of intensity during the pilot and was therefore stopped by the research team.

During the treadmill running, we observed five cases of fetal bradycardia, two of which were sustained (Fig 2). All cases of bradycardia were observed immediately after interval two to four, with four participants exercising at or above 90% of estimated  $HR_{max}$ . One participant exercised 87% of estimated  $HR_{max}$ . There were 12 cases of fetal tachycardia during treadmill running. Two were observed after the first interval, with

FHR slightly above the normal range, and the participants exercising at 88% and 89% of estimated  $HR_{max}$ . The remaining fetal tachycardias were observed after interval two to four, with the participants exercising at 86% to 94% of estimated  $HR_{max}$ .

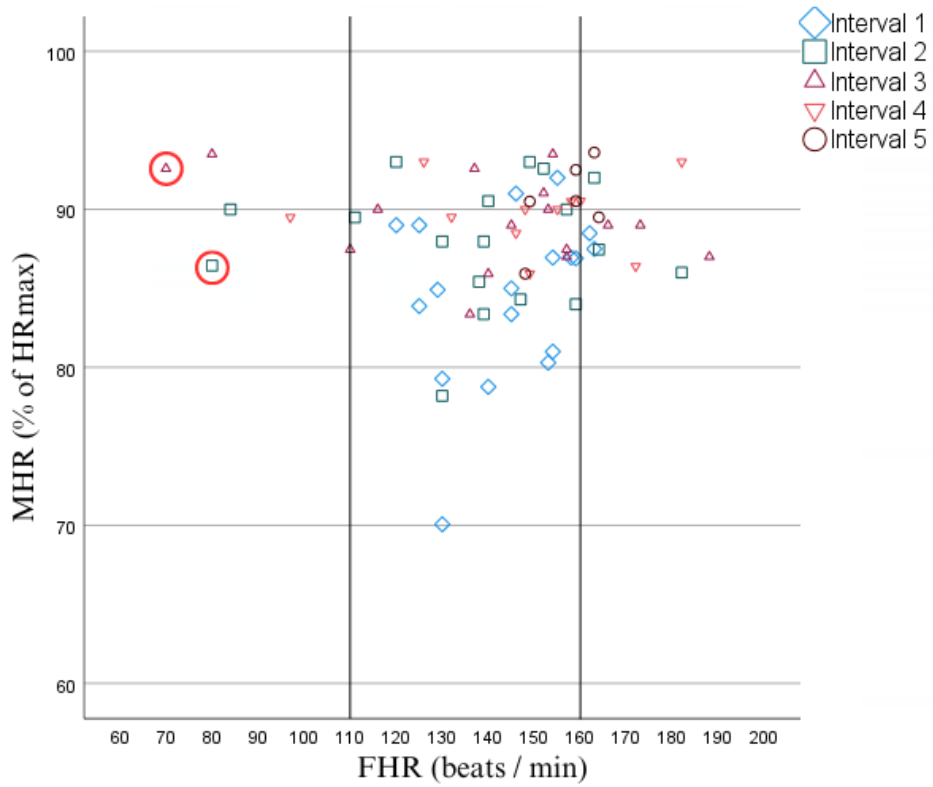


Figure 2 Plot of FHR versus % of estimated  $HR_{max}$  in treadmill running. Normal FHR range is between the vertical lines. Cases of sustained fetal bradycardia are marked.

Of the five participants with fetal bradycardia, two exercised at a Borg's rating of 17 out of 20, two at 18 and one at 19 at the end of the interval prior to observing the fetal bradycardia (Fig 3). The participants experiencing fetal tachycardia exercised at RPE ratings from 13 to 19.

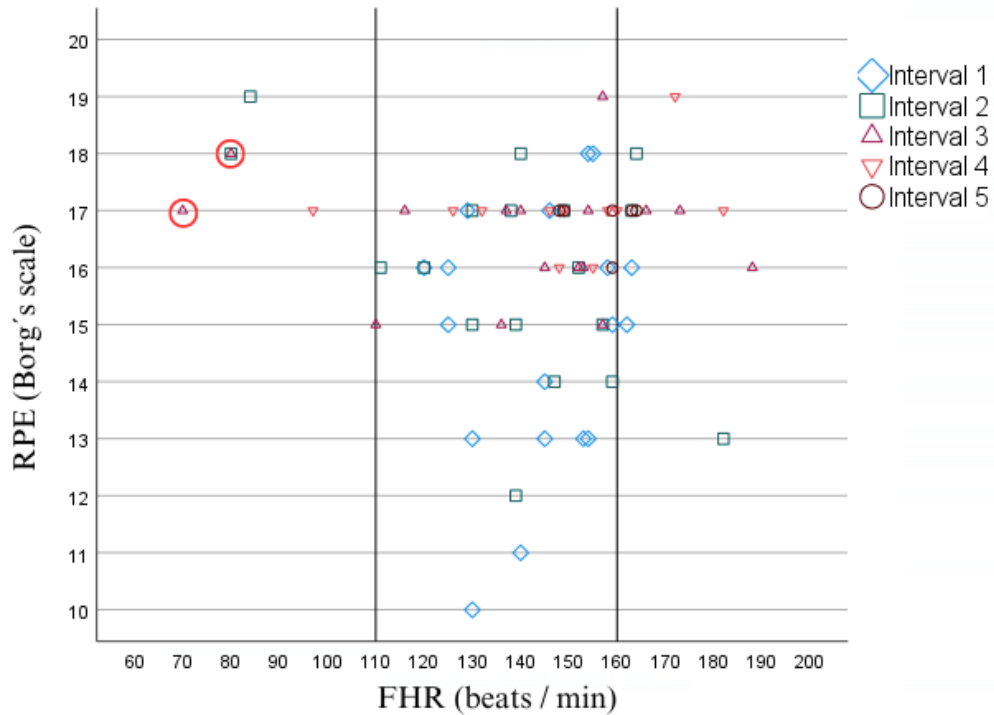


Figure 3 Plot of FHR versus RPE in treadmill running. Normal FHR range is between the vertical lines. Cases of sustained fetal bradycardia are marked.

#### 4.2.2 FHR during stationary bicycling

All 20 women participated in stationary bicycling, with 18 completing all five intervals. One participant reached the upper intensity limit during the pilot and was stopped by the research team, and one had fetal bradycardia after the fourth interval. In addition, two participants only completed parts of the fifth interval, one due to reaching the upper intensity limit during the pilot, and one chose to stop due to her legs feeling too fatigued to continue. Out of the 20 participants that performed the stationary bicycling exercise, we observed three cases of fetal bradycardia, two of which were sustained. One occurred after the fourth interval, and two after the fifth interval, as presented in figure 4. Two participants' exercised at 90%, and one at 81% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  at the end of the interval prior to the fetal bradycardia. There were 16 cases of fetal tachycardia, with the majority happening after interval three or four. MHR ranged from 75% to 94% of estimated  $HR_{max}$ .

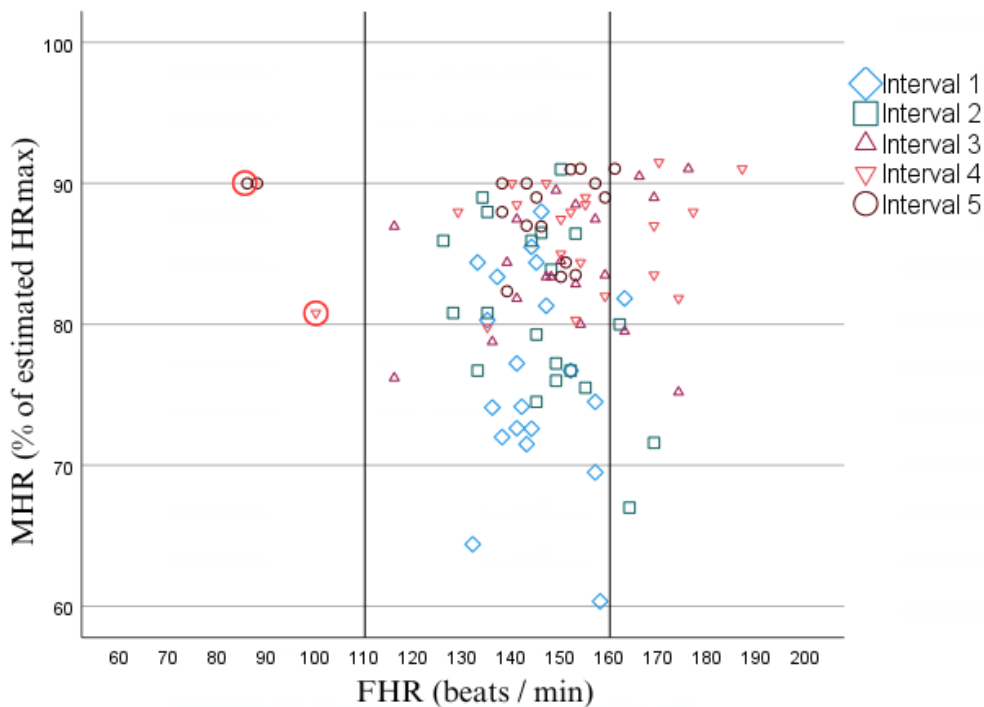


Figure 4 Plot of FHR versus % of estimated  $HR_{max}$  in stationary bicycling. Normal FHR range is between the vertical lines. Cases of sustained fetal bradycardia are marked.

The three participants experiencing fetal bradycardia during stationary bicycling exercised at RPE 15, 17 and 18, as presented in figure 5. Participants experiencing fetal tachycardia had Borg's ratings from 13 to 18.

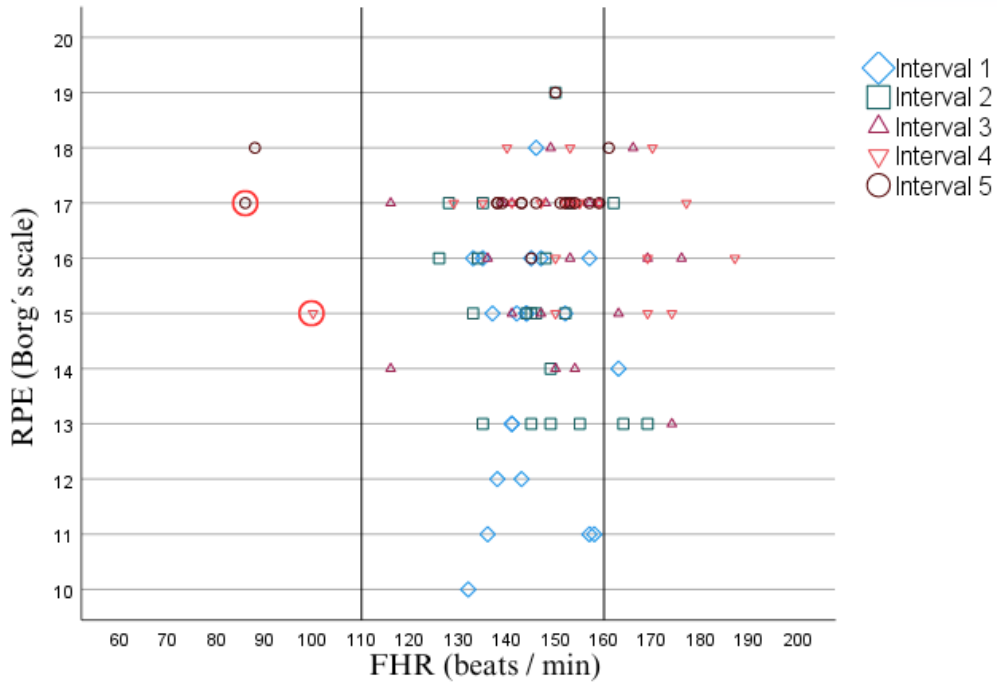


Figure 5 Plot of FHR versus RPE in stationary bicycling. Normal FHR range is between the vertical lines. Cases of sustained fetal bradycardia are marked.

## 5. Discussion

The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate the FHR response to HIIT in pregnant frequent exercisers and elite athletes during gestational week 26-35. During treadmill running fetal bradycardia was observed in five out of 18 participants, two of which were sustained ( $>3$  min). Further, fetal tachycardia was observed in 12 out of 18 participants. During stationary bicycling fetal bradycardia was observed in three out of 20 participants, two of which were sustained. Fetal tachycardia was observed in 16 out of 20 participants. However, when interpreting the findings it is important to note that the definition of sustained fetal bradycardia ( $>3$  min) is conservative and of considerably shorter duration than what is considered a change of baseline ( $>10$  min) (ACOG, 2010). Our results also suggests that it is individual differences in what intensity is tolerated before FHR is negatively affected.

The secondary aim was to investigate the difference in FHR response between different exercise modes: treadmill running and stationary bicycling. Five out of eight cases of bradycardia were observed during treadmill running, and three during stationary cycling. Even with a slightly lower number of participants in treadmill running, and higher drop-out during the intervals, there were more cases of fetal bradycardia. In addition, fetal bradycardias occurred earlier during treadmill running compared to stationary cycling. Hence, it may seem like treadmill running has an increased risk of fetal bradycardia compared to stationary bicycling. This could potentially be due to differences in the two exercise modes. Running is a weight bearing exercise and both the mother and fetus experience vertical movement, while stationary bicycling keeps the upper body in a relatively stable position.

The difference in the number of fetal bradycardias between treadmill running and stationary bicycling could also be due to exercise intensity. During the treadmill running exercise, participants met target intensity more consistently, and generally reached higher intensities during the intervals, with some participants reaching slightly above target intensity. During stationary bicycling, some of the participants said fatigued legs hindered them from reaching the target intensity, and it seems that most participants were unable to reach the same HR as during treadmill running. Based on our observations, we hypothesize that the higher number of fetal bradycardias during

treadmill running could be attributed to spending more time at the target intensity of 90% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  and RPE 17 on Borg's scale. However, to the authors' knowledge, the difference in FHR response between the different exercise modes has not previously been investigated, and the current findings are not sufficient to reach a conclusion.

Considering previous research has shown an elevation in FHR during maternal exercise, it was expected to observe a relatively high incidence of fetal tachycardia during both treadmill running and stationary bicycling (ACOG, 2020c). A higher number of fetal tachycardias were observed during stationary cycling compared to treadmill running. However, there were two more participants in stationary cycling and 11 more participants completing all five intervals, which could explain the higher number of fetal tachycardias.

In contrast to findings from the study performed by Anderson et al. (2021) on highly and moderately active pregnant women, we observed some cases of fetal bradycardia during HIIT in the current study. Anderson et al. found no adverse FHR responses in 14 participants performing HIIT with a similar intensity target. However, this protocol consisted of shorter intervals and different exercise modes compared to the current study, and participants did not consistently reach the target intensity during the entire workout. One or more of these factors could explain the different findings in FHR response.

Similarly to the study performed on pregnant elite athletes by Salvesen et al. (2012), our findings support the conclusion that exercising at intensities around or above 90% of maternal  $HR_{max}$  might increase risk of fetal bradycardia. Contrary to findings by Salvesen et al., our results show that most of the participants can tolerate maternal exercise at this intensity without any concerning changes in FHR. However, FHR responses were individual, and during stationary cycling, one participant's fetus experienced bradycardia after an interval where exercise intensity was 80% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  and RPE 15 on Borg's scale. This is a much lower intensity compared to participants in Salvesen et al., but this finding also stands out compared to findings from the remaining participants in the current study.

## **5.1 Methodological considerations**

### **5.1.1 Protocol rest period**

Based on the protocol outlined by Salvesen et al (2012), the rest period between intervals was set to four minutes. However, some rest periods had to be expanded to get complete measurements and ensure fetal wellbeing. It is important to acknowledge that the duration of rest periods may deviate from typical exercise routines. In addition, the women were lying down during assessments, were in normal exercise settings most people would probably walk, jog or cycle with lower resistance during rest periods. Consequently, it should be noted that while our findings demonstrate the safety of exercise using this specific protocol for the majority of participants, the application of different break times might yield different outcomes. For instance, in our protocol, a fetal bradycardia lasting 2.5 minutes would return to normal levels prior to the subsequent exercise interval. However, in normal exercise settings, the break time might be shorter, and most people are likely performing light exercise in the break. This could potentially result in continuing exercise while fetal bradycardia is still ongoing.

### **5.1.2 Participants and recruitment**

The original protocol was applied to a participant group consisting of elite athletes. Restricting the participant group to elite athletes poses difficulties in reaching a substantial number of participants due to few pregnancies among this exclusive group within a specific timeframe. Furthermore, it would limit generalization of results. It was therefore decided to also include frequent exercisers, as this enables a larger population group, and findings can be generalized to a larger population. The rationale behind including frequent exercisers while excluding untrained women was to ensure that participants were accustomed to higher exercise volumes and intensities. This criterion was established to maintain consistency in the study group. Including participants who are already accustomed to similar exercise levels aligns with the ethical considerations of protecting the health and welfare of participants and their fetuses.

Participants in the study were recruited based on meeting the inclusion criteria and being able to partake in testing during the available test days. Data collection took place at the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences in Oslo, without the financial resources to cover travel expenses for participants, resulting in a participant pool predominantly located in and around Oslo. In addition, the recruitment process in this study utilized



social media as the main recruitment platform, as this was a cost-effective and efficient means of reaching a large pool of potential participants. As a result, information about the study was more likely to reach active users of social media platforms. Hence, participant sample may not be fully representative of pregnant frequent exercisers.

### **5.1.3 Methods of measurements**

The main outcome measure for this thesis was FHR, which was measured using color Doppler ultrasound. This method makes it possible to measure both FHR and uteroplacental blood flow, which made it an appropriate choice for the main fetal outcomes in this study. It is the most commonly used FHR measurement method in clinical settings (Kupka et al., 2020). Doppler ultrasound is also used in the studies by Salvesen et al. (2012) and Anderson et al. (2021), which makes findings comparable to previous research.

MHR was one of the measurements used to supervise intensity during exercise. Measurements were performed using a HR monitor and complimentary chest strap, which has been proven to be accurate for measuring HR in the general population (Gilgen-Ammann et al., 2019). However, finding an accurate way of estimating the target intensity of 90% of  $HR_{max}$  presents a more complex challenge. Conducting  $HR_{max}$  testing was not feasible due to potential risk when exceeding 90% of  $HR_{max}$  during pregnancy (Salvesen et al., 2012). Using pre-pregnancy values would limit the inclusion criteria further, as participants would have to know their pre-pregnancy  $HR_{max}$ . Alternatively, recruiting women planning to fall pregnant to test  $HR_{max}$  before pregnancy, would introduce an additional, time-consuming process. In addition, using pre-pregnancy  $HR_{max}$  would still leave the challenge of determining accurate  $HR_{max}$  during pregnancy, as we know that there are several physiological changes that occur in the cardiovascular system during pregnancy (Lotgering et al., 1991, p. 1019; Melchiorre et al., 2012, pp. 414-416). Physiological changes during pregnancy also limits the accuracy of estimates made for the general population.

Due to these challenges, it was decided to use  $HR_{max}$  estimations presented in a previous study on HIIT during pregnancy by Anderson et al. (2021). The article presents estimations of 80-90% of  $HR_{max}$  during pregnancy based on finding in a previous study that investigated HR among 156 pregnant women (Mottola et al., 2006). Estimations

differ depending on age group and activity level. However, estimations for  $HR_{max}$  in the general population been proven to have low accuracy, and to the authors knowledge, the validation of the applied estimations have not been thoroughly investigated (Shookster et al., 2020). Therefore, we cannot be certain whether these estimates accurately reflect the participants' actual  $HR_{max}$ .

To account for the uncertainty of  $HR_{max}$ , participants' RPE was also measured using Borg's scale. The validity of the Borg's scale among pregnant women has been investigated in several studies by comparing RPE to objective intensity measurements (Da Silva et al., 2020; O'Neill et al., 1992; Petrov Fieril et al., 2016; Santos et al., 2016). Three of the articles found no correlation when RPE was compared to HR (O'Neill et al., 1992; Petrov Fieril et al., 2016; Santos et al., 2016). However, one study found agreement between predicted RPE based on HR and observed RPE values (Da Silva et al., 2020). Furthermore, Borg's RPE scale seem to be one of the most known and commonly used RPE scales, and some of the participants were already familiarized with it. It has also been previously utilized by Anderson et al. (2021) to archive similar exercise intensity in pregnant women, making it a suitable choice for this study.

## **5.2 Recommendations and practical implications**

The current study suggests that exercising at high intensity up to 90% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  and 17 on Borg's scale could be regarded as safe and does not compromise fetal wellbeing in pregnant frequent exercisers and elite athletes. However, it is important to note individual differences in how well this is tolerated, as most participants exercised at target intensity without any adverse effects on FHR. Some of the participants still experienced fetal bradycardia at or around this intensity, and for one participant, maternal exercise was at a significantly lower intensity when fetal bradycardia occurred, with MHR at 80.8% of estimated  $HR_{max}$  and RPE 15 on Borg's scale. When interoperating these findings, it is important to note the long rest periods in the protocol. For pregnant women exercising with shorter rest periods between intervals, the impact on FHR might differ, even if the exercise intensity and duration of intervals is similar to the protocol. To be precautionary, pregnant women might choose to exercise at a slightly lower intensity when using shorter breaks.

When considering exercise mode, one might regard stationary bicycling to be the safer choice for pregnant women wanting to exercise at high intensity up to 90% of  $HR_{max}$  and RPE 17 on Borg's scale. However, from the current results it seems likely that exercise intensity is the determining factor for the difference in fetal bradycardias between exercise modes. If that is the case, exercise mode will not matter if intensity remains the same. However, in the current study, participants seemed less likely to reach an intensity that may negatively affect FHR when exercising at the stationary bicycle.

### **5.3 Future research**

This study contributes to addressing the research gap in safety limits of maternal high-intensity-exercise during pregnancy. Future studies should explore the immediate fetal responses to maternal high-intensity exercise using varying exercise protocols, such as different interval durations and exercise modes. In addition, studies investigating the long-term impact of maternal high-intensity exercise on fetal health are necessary to ensure safety. In the Strong Mama project, this is addressed by a follow-up conversation six weeks after each participant's due date regarding birth outcomes.

To bridge the knowledge gap for the general pregnant population, future studies should also include participants with lower activity levels. Expanding the knowledge on how hard previously inactive or less active women can exercise during pregnancy could possibly open opportunities for those wanting to increase their activity level during pregnancy. In addition, including women of different nationalities, ethnicities and of different BMI categories would expand the population these findings may be applied to. However, it is crucial to exercise caution when conducting further research, as there are potential risks of inducing fetal bradycardia, identified previously by Salvesen et al. (2012) and partially in this study.

## 6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate acute fetal responses during high-intensity exercise in pregnant frequent exercisers and elite athletes during week 26 to 35 of gestation. The majority of the well-trained participants demonstrated good tolerance to high-intensity exercise, reaching up to approximately 90% of  $HR_{max}$  and an RPE of 17 on Borg's scale. However, it should be noted that five out of 18 participants experienced fetal bradycardia during treadmill running, and three out of 20 during stationary bicycling. These findings support current recommendations to avoid exercise above 90% of  $HR_{max}$  during pregnancy. Treadmill running had a higher occurrence of fetal bradycardia compared with stationary bicycling. More cases of fetal bradycardia during treadmill running may be attributed to participants achieving higher intensity levels in this exercise mode.

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## Abbreviations

ACOG	American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist
BMI	Body mass index
CO	Cardiac output
FHR	Fetal heart rate
GDM	Gestational diabetes mellitus
HIIT	High-intensity interval training
HR	Heart rate
HR <sub>max</sub>	Maximal heart rate
LBW	Low body weight
LGA	Large for gestational age
MHR	Maternal heart rate
RCT	Randomized controlled trial
RPE	Rate of perceived exertion
SD	Standard deviation
SGA	Small for gestational age
SV	Stroke volume

## **List of appendices**

Appendix 1: Approval of the project application by REK

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Appendix 6: Written information and consent form for participants

<b>Region:</b>	<b>Saksbehandler:</b>	<b>Telefon:</b>	<b>Vår dato:</b>	<b>Vår referanse:</b>
REK sør-øst D	Silje U. Lauvrak	22845520	12.09.2022	478976

Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad

**Prosjektsøknad:** Det store kjønnsgapet i idrettsmedisinsk forskning - graviditet, helse, trening og morsrollen blant eliteutøvere

**Søknadsnummer:** 478976

**Forskningsansvarlig institusjon:** Norges idrettshøgskole

## Prosjektsøknad godkjennes

### Søkers beskrivelse

#### Formål:

*I dette forskningsprosjektet har vi som mål å fylle viktige kunnskapshull relatert til trening, sportsprestasjoner og helse for gravide utøvere. Målsettingen er å undersøke effekten av ulike typer høyintensiv trening på ulike helsevariabler hos mor og foster. Det vil i tillegg bli igangsatt en omfattende nordisk kartlegging for å studere idrettskvinnenes erfaringer med graviditet, fødsel, trening, helseaspekter og praktiske utfordringer.*

#### Metode:

*Prosjektet er todelt: I del 1 av prosjektet vil vi rekruttere 30 idrettsutøvere og 30 gravide kvinner med et høyt aktivitetsnivå til å gjennomføre tre intervallpregede fysiske tester (utholdenhet: løping og sykling, og høy intensitet styrketrening). Hensikten er å måle akutte effekter mht. fosterets hjerterefreknens, blodstrøm gjennom navlesnoren og kvinnens kroppstemperatur. Laboratorietestene vil overvåkes av en gynekolog, og vil gjennomføres i svangerskapsuke 26-32. I del 2 vil vi utvikle elektroniske spørreskjema for å kartlegge nåværende og tidligere idrettsutøveres opplevelse av graviditeten, mors og fosters helse, idrettsdeltakelse, samt idrettskarrieren etter fødsel. Nåværende gravide vil svare på et spørreskjema i 1. trimester, 2. trimester, 3. trimester, og 6 uker, 6 måneder og 12 måneder etter fødsel. Tidligere gravide vil kun svare på et spørreskjema.*

#### Nytteverdi og betydningen av prosjektet:

*Idretten er en viktig arena for å fremme likestilling, likeverd og rettferdighet mellom kjønnene. Det er imidlertid fortsatt slik at kvinner får mindre oppmerksomhet, mindre støtte og kompensasjon, samt dårligere helseomsorg enn mannlige idrettsutøvere. Hvis vi skal klare å styrke kvinnenes posisjon og redusere disse kjønnsforskjellene, er det nødvendig å prioritere og drive forskning på idrettskvinner. Funn fra vårt forskningsprosjekt vil gi verdifulle data for utvikling av kliniske retningslinjer og anbefalinger for gravide utøvere og andre gravide med et høyt aktivitetsnivå. Videre kan kunnskap om disse temaene gjøre det lettere å planlegge og gjennomføre en graviditet, i tillegg til å lykkes med å gå tilbake til en aktiv sportskarriere etter fødselen.*

Vi viser til tilbakemelding mottatt 09.08.2022, i forbindelse med ovennevnte

forskningsprosjekt. Tilbakemeldingen ble behandlet av Regional komité for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskningsetikk (REK) sør-øst D i møtet 17.08.2022. Vurderingen er gjort med hjemmel i helseforskningsloven § 10.

## **REKs vurdering**

### **Saksgang**

Søknaden ble første gang behandlet i møtet 01.06.2022, hvor komiteen utsatte å fatte vedtak i saken. Komiteen ba om en nærmere redegjørelse for den vitenskapelige nytteverdien av å sammenligne eliteutøvere som rekrutteres via Olympiatoppen, og regelmessig aktive gravide kvinner som rekrutteres fra helsestasjon og gjennom sosiale medier. Komiteen ba også om en klargjøring av hvordan sistnevnte gruppe skal velges ut, og etterspurte tydelige inklusjons- og eksklusjonskriter. Dette fordi komiteen var bekymret for at deltagelse for denne gruppen potensielt kunne være forbundet med en større risiko enn den de utsetter seg for gjennom den treningen de vanligvis bedriver, dersom den vanlige treningen ligger betydelig lavere i intensitet enn studieintervensjonen.

Prosjektleder har i sin tilbakemelding besvart komiteens spørsmål, og har også oppdatert forskningsprotokollen i henhold til dette.

Det avklares at de to gruppene ikke skal sammenlignes likevel, men at det er viktig å undersøke hvordan høyintensiv trening påvirker mor og foster både blant eliteutøvere og regelmessig aktive kvinner. Begrunnelsen for dette er at gravide eliteutøvere utgjør en svært liten del av de som blir gravide, og resultatene vil være vanskelige å generalisere til andre gravide kvinner.

Videre fremkommer det av tilbakemeldingen at inklusjonskriteriene for gruppen regelmessig aktive kvinner er endret til «A person who performs regular strenuous exercise both for fitness and competition (4 hours/week) for at least 2 years pre pregnancy, not having participated in competitive sports at national or international level the last 2 years». Følgende begrunnelse er gitt: «Vi tror at en slik definisjon på regelmessig aktive kvinner vil gjøre at vi kommer i kontakt med kvinner som, på lik linje med eliteutøverne, vanligvis utfører trening med innslag av en slik intensitet som vi utsetter de for i studien. Ved rekruttering vil vi stille kvinnene kontrollspørsmål om intensitet og varighet på den treningen de utfører til vanlig, slik at vi er sikre på at de faller innenfor inklusjonskriteriene. Videre ønsker vi å rekruttere disse kvinnene gjennom treningssentre og klinikker som tilbyr trening og behandling av gravide, i tillegg til gjennom helsestasjon og sosiale medier.»

Det er i tillegg lagt til noen mindre endringer i prosjektet, og det er inkludert to nye delprosjekter: i) undersøkelse av væsketap og hudtemperatur, samt sammenligning av to ulike måleinstrumenter for kjernetemperatur, og ii) et dybdeintervju for å undersøke planlegging av graviditet, treningsmodifisering, sosial støtte, opplevelse av å kombinere graviditet og eliteidrett, utfordringer knyttet til graviditet og tiden etter fødsel og retur til idretten. Endringene er beskrevet i et eget vedlegg, og kommer også tydelig frem i den oppdaterte protokollen.

### **Komiteens vurdering**

Prosjektets formål er å få mer kunnskap om trening, sportsprestasjoner og helse for gravide idrettsutøvere. Prosjektet består av to deler:

I del 1 skal 30 gravide idrettsutøvere og 30 gravide kvinner som har et høyt aktivitetsnivå, gjennomføre tre intervallpregede fysiske tester (løping på tredemølle, stasjonær sykling og høyintensiv styrketrening). Akutte effekter av testene skal undersøkes ved å måle fosterets hjertefrekvens, blodstrøm gjennom navlesnoren og kvinnens kroppstemperatur. Testene skal overvåkes av en gynekolog, og vil gjennomføres i svangerskapsuke 26-32. Det er utarbeidet klare kriterier både når det gjelder mor og foster for når testene skal avsluttes/brytes.

I del 2 skal det utvikles et elektroniske spørreskjema for å kartlegge nåværende og tidligere idrettsutøveres opplevelse av graviditeten, mors og fosters helse, idrettsdeltakelse, samt idrettskarrieren etter fødsel. Det skal inkluderes 100 idrettskvinner som er, eller har vært, gravide. For nåværende gravide innebærer deltagelse at de svarer på et spørreskjema i 1. trimester, 2. trimester, 3. trimester, samt 6 uker, 6 måneder og 12 måneder etter fødsel. De skal også gjennomføre et intervju 6 uker etter fødsel der temaet er fødselsopplevelse, fødselsforløp og -utfall. For tidligere gravide innebærer deltagelse at de svarer på ett spørreskjema.

I tillegg skal det gjøres en understudie på temperaturmåling og et dybdeintervju, jamfør prosjektleders tilbakemelding.

Etter komiteens syn har prosjektleder besvart komiteens spørsmål på en tilfredsstillende måte. Komiteen ser nødvendigheten av å inkludere begge grupper i prosjektet, og endringene som er gjort i inklusjonskriteriene for gruppen regelmessig aktive kvinner, vil, slik komiteen vurderer det, redusere risikoen for at det inkluderes kvinner der deres vanlige trening ligger betydelig lavere i intensitet enn studieintervensjonen, en bekymring komiteen hadde ved førstegangsbehandling av saken.

Alle testene som gjøres skal overvåkes av en gynekolog, og det er utarbeidet klare kriterier for når testene skal avsluttes/brytes, både når det gjelder mor og foster. Komiteen anser med dette at sikkerheten og beredskapen i prosjektet er god.

Komiteen har heller ingen innvendinger til de to nye delstudiene som er lagt til.

På bakgrunn av dette godkjenner komiteen at studien gjennomføres som beskrevet i søknad, oppdatert protokoll og tilbakemelding fra prosjektleder.

### **Vedtak**

REK har gjort en helhetlig forskningsetisk vurdering av alle prosjektets sider. Prosjektet godkjennes med hjemmel i helseforskningsloven § 10.

Vi gjør samtidig oppmerksom på at etter ny personopplysningslov må det også foreligge et behandlingsgrunnlag etter personvernforordningen. Det må forankres i egen institusjon.

Godkjenningen er gitt under forutsetning av at prosjektet gjennomføres slik det er beskrevet i søknad, oppdatert protokoll, tilbakemelding fra prosjektleder og de bestemmelser som følger av helseforskningsloven med forskrifter.

Tillatelsen gjelder til 31.12.2025. Av dokumentasjonshensyn skal opplysningene likevel bevares inntil 31.12.2030. Forskningsfilen skal oppbevares atskilt i en nøkkel- og en opplysningsfil. Opplysningene skal deretter slettes eller anonymiseres, senest innen et halvt år fra denne dato.

Forskningsprosjektets data skal oppbevares forsvarlig, se personopplysningsforskriften kapittel 2, og Helsedirektoratets veileder for «Personvern og informasjonssikkerhet i forskningsprosjekter innenfor helse og omsorgssektoren».

Komiteens avgjørelse var enstemmig.

### **Sluttmelding**

Prosjektleder skal sende sluttmelding til REK på eget skjema via REK-portalen senest 6 måneder etter sluttdato 31.12.2025, jf. helseforskningsloven § 12. Dersom prosjektet ikke starter opp eller gjennomføres meldes dette også via skjemaet for sluttmelding.

### **Søknad om endring**

Dersom man ønsker å foreta vesentlige endringer i formål, metode, tidsløp eller organisering må prosjektleder sende søknad om endring via portalen på eget skjema til REK, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11.

### **Klageadgang**

Du kan klage på REKs vedtak, jf. forvaltningsloven § 28 flg. Klagen sendes på eget skjema via REK portalen. Klagefristen er tre uker fra du mottar dette brevet. Dersom REK opprettholder vedtaket, sender REK klagen videre til Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for medisin og helsefag (NEM) for endelig vurdering, jf. forskningsetikkloven § 10 og helseforskningsloven § 10.

Med vennlig hilsen

Pål Aukrust  
Prof. Dr.med.  
Komitéleder REK sør-øst D

Silje U. Lauvrak  
Seniorrådgiver

*Kopi til:*

Norges idrettshøgskole



<b>Region:</b>	<b>Saksbehandler:</b>	<b>Telefon:</b>	<b>Vår dato:</b>	<b>Vår referanse:</b>
REK sør-øst D	Silje U. Lauvrak	22845520	14.03.2023	478976

Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad

**Prosjektsøknad:** Det store kjønnsgapet i idrettsmedisinsk forskning - graviditet, helse, trening og morsrollen blant eliteutøvere

**Søknadsnummer:** 478976

**Forskningsansvarlig institusjon:** Norges idrettshøgskole

## Prosjektsøknad: Endring godkjennes med vilkår

### Søkers beskrivelse

#### Formål:

I dette forskningsprosjektet har vi som mål å fylle viktige kunnskapshull relatert til trening, sportsprestasjoner og helse for gravide utøvere. Målsettingen er å undersøke effekten av ulike typer høyintensiv trening på ulike helsevariabler hos mor og foster. Det vil i tillegg bli igangsatt en omfattende nordisk kartlegging for å studere idrettskvinnenes erfaringer med graviditet, fødsel, trening, helseaspekter og praktiske utfordringer.

#### Metode:

Prosjektet er todelt: I del 1 av prosjektet vil vi rekruttere 30 idrettsutøvere og 30 gravide kvinner med et høyt aktivitetsnivå til å gjennomføre tre intervallpregede fysiske tester (utholdenhet: løping og sykling, og høy intensitet styrketrening). Hensikten er å måle akutte effekter mht. fosterets hjertefrekvens, blodstrøm gjennom navlesnoren og kvinnens kroppstemperatur. Laboratorietestene vil overvåkes av en gynekolog, og vil gjennomføres i svangerskapsuke 26-32. I del 2 vil vi utvikle elektroniske spørreskjema for å kartlegge nåværende og tidligere idrettsutøveres opplevelse av graviditeten, mors og fosters helse, idrettsdeltakelse, samt idrettskarrieren etter fødsel. Nåværende gravide vil svare på et spørreskjema i 1. trimester, 2. trimester, 3. trimester, og 6 uker, 6 måneder og 12 måneder etter fødsel. Tidligere gravide vil kun svare på et spørreskjema.

#### Nytteverdi og betydningen av prosjektet:

Idretten er en viktig arena for å fremme likestilling, likeverd og rettferdighet mellom kjønnene. Det er imidlertid fortsatt slik at kvinner får mindre oppmerksomhet, mindre støtte og kompensasjon, samt dårligere helseomsorg enn mannlige idrettsutøvere. Hvis vi skal klare å styrke kvinnenes posisjon og redusere disse kjønnsforskjellene, er det nødvendig å prioritere og drive forskning på idrettskvinner. Funn fra vårt forskningsprosjekt vil gi verdifulle data for utvikling av kliniske retningslinjer og anbefalinger for gravide utøvere og andre gravide med et høyt aktivitetsnivå. Videre kan kunnskap om disse temaene gjøre det lettere å planlegge og gjennomføre en graviditet, i tillegg til å lykkes med å gå tilbake til en aktiv sportskarriere etter fødselen.

Vi viser til søknad om prosjektendring mottatt 13.03.2023 for ovennevnte

forskningsprosjekt. Søknaden er behandlet av leder for Regional komité for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskningsetikk (REK sør-øst D) på delegert fullmakt fra komiteen, med hjemmel i forskningsetikkforskriften § 7, første ledd, tredje punktum. Søknaden er vurdert med hjemmel i helseforskningsloven § 11.

### **Endringene innbærer:**

- inklusjon av flere aktive gravide kvinner, for å nå det ønskede antallet på 60 deltakere.

### **REKs vurdering**

Prosjektleder opplyser at det er svært vanskelig å rekruttere gravide eliteøvere. Det er derfor behov for å kunne inkludere flere aktive kvinner for å nå det ønskede antallet på 60 deltakere.

Det stilles som vilkår at oppdatert protokoll med sporbare endringer sendes REK på skjema for endring og / eller henvendelse.

Komiteens leder har vurdert søknaden og har ingen forskningsetiske innvendinger mot endringene av prosjektet.

### **Vedtak**

REK har gjort en forskningsetisk vurdering av endringene i prosjektet, og godkjenner prosjektet slik det nå foreligger, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11.

Vi gjør samtidig oppmerksom på at etter ny personopplysningslov må det også foreligge et behandlingsgrunnlag etter personvernforordningen. Det må forankres i egen institusjon.

Tillatelsen er gitt under forutsetning av at prosjektet gjennomføres slik det er beskrevet i søknaden, endringssøknad, oppdatert protokoll og de bestemmelser som følger av helseforskningsloven med forskrifter.

### **Sluttmelding**

Prosjektleder skal sende sluttmelding til REK på eget skjema via REK-portalen senest 6 måneder etter sluttdato 31.12.2025, jf. helseforskningsloven § 12. Dersom prosjektet ikke starter opp eller gjennomføres meldes dette også via skjemaet for sluttmelding.

### **Søknad om endring**

Dersom man ønsker å foreta vesentlige endringer i formål, metode, tidsløp eller organisering må prosjektleder sende søknad om endring via portalen på eget skjema til REK, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11.

### **Klageadgang**

Du kan klage på REKs vedtak, jf. forvaltningsloven § 28 flg. Klagen sendes på eget skjema via REK portalen. Klagefristen er tre uker fra du mottar dette brevet. Dersom REK opprettholder vedtaket, sender REK klagen videre til Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for medisin og helsefag (NEM) for endelig vurdering, jf. forskningsetikkloven § 10 og helseforskningsloven § 10.

Med vennlig hilsen

Pål Aukrust  
Professor em. dr. med.  
Leder REK sør-øst D

Anne Åbyholm-Brodal  
Seniorkonsulent

*Kopi til:*

Norges idrettshøgskole

<b>Region:</b>	<b>Saksbehandler:</b>	<b>Telefon:</b>	<b>Vår dato:</b>	<b>Vår referanse:</b>
REK sør-øst D	Silje U. Lauvrak	22845520	17.11.2022	478976

Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad

**Prosjektsøknad:** Det store kjønnsgapet i idrettsmedisinsk forskning - graviditet, helse, trening og morsrollen blant eliteutøvere

**Søknadsnummer:** 478976

**Forskningsansvarlig institusjon:** Norges idrettshøgskole

## Prosjektsøknad: Endring godkjennes

### Søkers beskrivelse

#### Formål:

*I dette forskningsprosjektet har vi som mål å fylle viktige kunnskapshull relatert til trening, sportsprestasjoner og helse for gravide utøvere. Målsettingen er å undersøke effekten av ulike typer høyintensiv trening på ulike helsevariabler hos mor og foster. Det vil i tillegg bli igangsatt en omfattende nordisk kartlegging for å studere idrettskvinnenes erfaringer med graviditet, fødsel, trening, helseaspekter og praktiske utfordringer.*

#### Metode:

*Prosjektet er todelt: I del 1 av prosjektet vil vi rekruttere 30 idrettsutøvere og 30 gravide kvinner med et høyt aktivitetsnivå til å gjennomføre tre intervallpregede fysiske tester (utholdenhet: løping og sykling, og høy intensitet styrketrening). Hensikten er å måle akutte effekter mht. fosterets hjertefrekvens, blodstrøm gjennom navlesnoren og kvinnens kroppstemperatur. Laboratorietestene vil overvåkes av en gynekolog, og vil gjennomføres i svangerskapsuke 26-32. I del 2 vil vi utvikle elektroniske spørreskjema for å kartlegge nåværende og tidligere idrettsutøveres opplevelse av graviditeten, mors og fosters helse, idrettsdeltakelse, samt idrettskarrieren etter fødsel. Nåværende gravide vil svare på et spørreskjema i 1. trimester, 2. trimester, 3. trimester, og 6 uker, 6 måneder og 12 måneder etter fødsel. Tidligere gravide vil kun svare på et spørreskjema.*

#### Nytteverdi og betydningen av prosjektet:

*Idretten er en viktig arena for å fremme likestilling, likeverd og rettferdighet mellom kjønnene. Det er imidlertid fortsatt slik at kvinner får mindre oppmerksomhet, mindre støtte og kompensasjon, samt dårligere helseomsorg enn mannlige idrettsutøvere. Hvis vi skal klare å styrke kvinnenes posisjon og redusere disse kjønnsforskjellene, er det nødvendig å prioritere og drive forskning på idrettskvinner. Funn fra vårt forskningsprosjekt vil gi verdifulle data for utvikling av kliniske retningslinjer og anbefalinger for gravide utøvere og andre gravide med et høyt aktivitetsnivå. Videre kan kunnskap om disse temaene gjøre det lettere å planlegge og gjennomføre en graviditet, i tillegg til å lykkes med å gå tilbake til en aktiv sportskarriere etter fødselen.*

REK viser til endringssøknad for ovennevnte forskningsprosjekt mottatt 14.11.2022 og 16.11.2022. Komiteleder for REK sør-øst D har vurdert søknaden på fullmakt fra REK sør-øst D. Søknaden er vurdert med hjemmel i helseforskningsloven § 11.

Endringene innebærer:

1) Ny versjon av forskningsprotokoll / prosjektplan, datert 14.11.2022.

- Deltakerne skal gjennomfører en økt tung styrketrening – 3 sett med 8 repetisjoner med høy motstand, slik at styrketreningsprotokollen vil være tilsvarende tredemølle- og sykkelprotokollen.

2) Oppdatert informasjonsskriv, del 1.

3) Spørsmål til ikke-gravide kontroller for å kontrollere for den eventuelle påvirkningen menstruasjonssyklus eller prevensjon har på temperaturregulering.

Vedlagt fulgte oppdatert protokoll (prosjektplan) datert 14.11.2022, og oppdatert informasjonsskriv, for del 1, begge dokumenter med sporbare endringer.

### **REKs vurdering**

Endringene er godt forklart og begrunnet i endringssøknaden.

Prosjektleder har i svar på spørsmål fra REK opplyst at spørsmålene til ikke - gravide (kontrollgruppe) stilles i forbindelse med rekuttering.

Komiteens leder har vurdert søknaden og har ingen forskningsetiske innvendinger til endringene i prosjektet.

### **Vedtak**

REK har gjort en forskningsetisk vurdering av endringen i prosjektet og godkjenner prosjektet slik det nå foreligger, jfr. helseforskningsloven § 11 annet ledd.

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at etter ny personopplysningslov må det også foreligge et behandlingsgrunnlag etter personvernforordningen. Det må forankres i egen institusjon.

Tillatelsen er gitt under forutsetning av at prosjektet gjennomføres slik det er beskrevet i søknaden, endringssøknad, oppdatert protokoll og de bestemmelser som følger av helseforskningsloven med forskrifter.

### **Sluttmelding**

Prosjektleder skal sende sluttmelding til REK på eget skjema via REK-portalen senest 6 måneder etter sluttdato 31.12.2025, jf. helseforskningsloven § 12. Dersom prosjektet ikke starter opp eller gjennomføres meldes dette også via skjemaet for sluttmelding.

### **Søknad om endring**

Dersom man ønsker å foreta vesentlige endringer i formål, metode, tidsløp eller organisering må prosjektleder sende søknad om endring via portalen på eget skjema til REK, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11.

**Klageadgang**

Du kan klage på REKs vedtak, jf. forvaltningsloven § 28 flg. Klagen sendes på eget skjema via REK portalen. Klagefristen er tre uker fra du mottar dette brevet. Dersom REK opprettholder vedtaket, sender REK klagen videre til Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for medisin og helsefag (NEM) for endelig vurdering, jf. forskningsetikkloven § 10 og helseforskningsloven § 10.

Med vennlig hilsen

Pål Aukrust  
Prof. em.dr. med.  
Komitéleder REK sør-øst D

Anne Åbyholm-Brodal  
Seniorrådgiver

*Kopi til:*

Norges idrettshøgskole

<b>Region:</b>	<b>Saksbehandler:</b>	<b>Telefon:</b>	<b>Vår dato:</b>	<b>Vår referanse:</b>
REK sør-øst D	Silje U. Lauvrak	22845520	21.02.2023	478976

Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad

**Prosjektsøknad:** Det store kjønnsgapet i idrettsmedisinsk forskning - graviditet, helse, trening og morsrollen blant eliteutøvere

**Søknadsnummer:** 478976

**Forskningsansvarlig institusjon:** Norges idrettshøgskole

## Prosjektsøknad: Endring godkjennes med vilkår

### Søkers beskrivelse

#### Formål:

I dette forskningsprosjektet har vi som mål å fylle viktige kunnskapshull relatert til trening, sportsprestasjoner og helse for gravide utøvere. Målsettingen er å undersøke effekten av ulike typer høyintensiv trening på ulike helsevariabler hos mor og foster. Det vil i tillegg bli igangsatt en omfattende nordisk kartlegging for å studere idrettskvinnenes erfaringer med graviditet, fødsel, trening, helseaspekter og praktiske utfordringer.

#### Metode:

Prosjektet er todelt: I del 1 av prosjektet vil vi rekruttere 30 idrettsutøvere og 30 gravide kvinner med et høyt aktivitetsnivå til å gjennomføre tre intervallpregede fysiske tester (utholdenhet: løping og sykling, og høy intensitet styrketrening). Hensikten er å måle akutte effekter mht. fosterets hjertefrekvens, blodstrøm gjennom navlesnoren og kvinnens kroppstemperatur. Laboratorietestene vil overvåkes av en gynekolog, og vil gjennomføres i svangerskapsuke 26-32. I del 2 vil vi utvikle elektroniske spørreskjema for å kartlegge nåværende og tidligere idrettsutøveres opplevelse av graviditeten, mors og fosters helse, idrettsdeltakelse, samt idrettskarrieren etter fødsel. Nåværende gravide vil svare på et spørreskjema i 1. trimester, 2. trimester, 3. trimester, og 6 uker, 6 måneder og 12 måneder etter fødsel. Tidligere gravide vil kun svare på et spørreskjema.

#### Nytteverdi og betydningen av prosjektet:

Idretten er en viktig arena for å fremme likestilling, likeverd og rettferdighet mellom kjønnene. Det er imidlertid fortsatt slik at kvinner får mindre oppmerksomhet, mindre støtte og kompensasjon, samt dårligere helseomsorg enn mannlige idrettsutøvere. Hvis vi skal klare å styrke kvinnenes posisjon og redusere disse kjønnsforskjellene, er det nødvendig å prioritere og drive forskning på idrettskvinner. Funn fra vårt forskningsprosjekt vil gi verdifulle data for utvikling av kliniske retningslinjer og anbefalinger for gravide utøvere og andre gravide med et høyt aktivitetsnivå. Videre kan kunnskap om disse temaene gjøre det lettere å planlegge og gjennomføre en graviditet, i tillegg til å lykkes med å gå tilbake til en aktiv sportskarriere etter fødselen.

Vi viser til søknad om prosjektendring mottatt 15.02.2023 for ovennevnte forskningsprosjekt. Søknaden er behandlet av leder for REK sør-øst D på delegert fullmakt fra komiteen, med hjemmel i forskningsetikkforskriften § 7, første ledd, tredje punktum. Søknaden er vurdert med hjemmel i helseforskningsloven § 11.

#### **Endringene innebærer:**

- 1) Utvidet rekruttering for kvalitativ del av studien (dybdeintervju). Rekruttering skal også skje blant deltakere som ikke deltar i hovedstudien. Informasjonsskriv, del 1 vedlagt.
- 2) Rekrutteringsmetode / rutine for innhenting av samtykke endres. Spørreundersøkelsen sendes ut elektronisk med inkludert samtykkeerklæring.
- 3) Treningen som utføres under studien er tilpasset /øket i intensitet for å speile den treningen kvinnene gjennomførere til vanlig.

#### **REKs vurdering**

Endringene er detaljert beskrevet i endringssøknaden.

Komiteen setter som vilkår at informasjon om at treningen som gjennomføres har blitt tilpasset slik at den bedre speiler den treningen kvinnene gjennomfører til vanlig, skal innarbeides i protokollen.

Oppdatert protokoll med sporbare endringer sendes REK til orientering på skjema for endring og / eller henvendelse i REK-portal.

Komiteens leder har vurdert søknaden og har utover nevnte forutsetning ingen forskningsetiske innvendinger til endringene slik de er beskrevet i skjema for prosjektendring.

#### **Vedtak**

REK har gjort en forskningsetisk vurdering av endringene i prosjektet, og godkjenner prosjektet slik det nå foreligger, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11, under forutsetning av at ovennevnte vilkår oppfylles.

I tillegg til vilkår som fremgår av dette vedtaket, er godkjenningen gitt under forutsetning av at prosjektet gjennomføres slik det er beskrevet i søknad, endringssøknad, oppdatert protokoll og de bestemmelser som følger av helseforskningsloven med forskrifter.

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at etter ny personopplysningslov må det også foreligge et behandlingsgrunnlag etter personvernforordningen. Det må forankres i egen institusjon.

#### **Sluttmelding**

Prosjektleder skal sende sluttmelding til REK på eget skjema via REK-portal senest 6 måneder etter sluttdato 31.12.2025, jf. helseforskningsloven § 12. Dersom prosjektet ikke starter opp eller gjennomføres meldes dette også via skjemaet for sluttmelding.

#### **Søknad om endring**



Dersom man ønsker å foreta vesentlige endringer i formål, metode, tidsløp eller organisering må prosjektleder sende søknad om endring via portalen på eget skjema til REK, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11.

**Klageadgang**

Du kan klage på REKs vedtak, jf. forvaltningsloven § 28 flg. Klagen sendes på eget skjema via REK portalen. Klagefristen er tre uker fra du mottar dette brevet. Dersom REK opprettholder vedtaket, sender REK klagen videre til Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for medisin og helsefag (NEM) for endelig vurdering, jf. forskningsetikkloven § 10 og helseforskningsloven § 10.

Med vennlig hilsen

Pål Aukrust  
Prof. em. dr. med.  
Komitéleder REK sør-øst D

Anne Åbyholm-Brodal  
Seniorkonsulent

*Kopi til:*

Norges idrettshøgskole

<b>Region:</b>	<b>Saksbehandler:</b>	<b>Telefon:</b>	<b>Vår dato:</b>	<b>Vår referanse:</b>
REK sør-øst D	Silje U. Lauvrak	22845520	26.09.2022	478976

Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad

**Prosjektsøknad:** Det store kjønnsgapet i idrettsmedisinsk forskning - graviditet, helse, trening og morsrollen blant eliteutøvere

**Søknadsnummer:** 478976

**Forskningsansvarlig institusjon:** Norges idrettshøgskole

## Prosjektsøknad: Endring godkjennes

### Søkers beskrivelse

#### Formål:

*I dette forskningsprosjektet har vi som mål å fylle viktige kunnskapshull relatert til trening, sportsprestasjoner og helse for gravide utøvere. Målsettingen er å undersøke effekten av ulike typer høyintensiv trening på ulike helsevariabler hos mor og foster. Det vil i tillegg bli igangsatt en omfattende nordisk kartlegging for å studere idrettskvinnenes erfaringer med graviditet, fødsel, trening, helseaspekter og praktiske utfordringer.*

#### Metode:

*Prosjektet er todelt: I del 1 av prosjektet vil vi rekruttere 30 idrettsutøvere og 30 gravide kvinner med et høyt aktivitetsnivå til å gjennomføre tre intervallpregede fysiske tester (utholdenhet: løping og sykling, og høy intensitet styrketrening). Hensikten er å måle akutte effekter mht. fosterets hjertefrekvens, blodstrøm gjennom navlesnoren og kvinnens kroppstemperatur. Laboratorietestene vil overvåkes av en gynekolog, og vil gjennomføres i svangerskapsuke 26-32. I del 2 vil vi utvikle elektroniske spørreskjema for å kartlegge nåværende og tidligere idrettsutøveres opplevelse av graviditeten, mors og fosters helse, idrettsdeltakelse, samt idrettskarrieren etter fødsel. Nåværende gravide vil svare på et spørreskjema i 1. trimester, 2. trimester, 3. trimester, og 6 uker, 6 måneder og 12 måneder etter fødsel. Tidligere gravide vil kun svare på et spørreskjema.*

#### Nytteverdi og betydningen av prosjektet:

*Idretten er en viktig arena for å fremme likestilling, likeverd og rettferdighet mellom kjønnene. Det er imidlertid fortsatt slik at kvinner får mindre oppmerksomhet, mindre støtte og kompensasjon, samt dårligere helseomsorg enn mannlige idrettsutøvere. Hvis vi skal klare å styrke kvinnenes posisjon og redusere disse kjønnsforskjellene, er det nødvendig å prioritere og drive forskning på idrettskvinner. Funn fra vårt forskningsprosjekt vil gi verdifulle data for utvikling av kliniske retningslinjer og anbefalinger for gravide utøvere og andre gravide med et høyt aktivitetsnivå. Videre kan kunnskap om disse temaene gjøre det lettere å planlegge og gjennomføre en graviditet, i tillegg til å lykkes med å gå tilbake til en aktiv sportskarriere etter fødselen.*

REK viser til endringssøknad for ovennevnte forskningsprosjekt mottatt 14.09.2022. Komiteleder for REK sør-øst D har vurdert søknaden på fullmakt fra REK sør-øst D. Søknaden er vurdert med hjemmel i helseforskningsloven § 11.

### **Endringene innebærer:**

- 1) Ny versjon av forskningsprotokoll.
  - Endret inklusjonskriterier fra svangerskapsuke 26-32 til: svangerskapsuke 26-35.
- 2) Nye medarbeidere er inkludert i prosjektet.
  - Sofia Persson, masterstudent, Norges idrettshøgskole.
  - Kaia Øvstedal, masterstudent, Norges idrettshøgskole.
  - Marlene Jensen, masterstudent, Norges idrettshøgskole.
  - Malin Olsen, masterstudent, Norges idrettshøgskole.
  - Roald Bahr, professor, Norges idrettshøgskole.
  - Gro Rugseth, førsteamanuensis, Norges idrettshøgskole.
  - Jørgen Melau, forsker,

### **REKs vurdering**

Komiteens leder har vurdert søknaden.

REK forutsetter i forbindelse med endrede inklusjonskriterier at det opprettholdes de samme eksklusjonskriterier/"stopp kriterier" under trening som tidligere.

REK forutsetter at de nye prosjektmedarbeiderne skal utføre arbeid i tråd med allerede godkjent forskningsprotokoll. Dersom det skal utføres ytterligere arbeid må dette sendes inn som en ny endringssøknad med oppdatert protokoll til REK.

Komiteens leder har etter dette ingen forskningsetiske innvendinger til endringen av prosjektet.

### **Vedtak**

REK har gjort en forskningsetisk vurdering av endringen i prosjektet og godkjenner prosjektet slik det nå foreligger, jfr. helseforskningsloven § 11 annet ledd.

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at etter ny personopplysningslov må det også foreligge et behandlingsgrunnlag etter personvernforordningen. Det må forankres i egen institusjon.

Tillatelsen er gitt under forutsetning av at prosjektet gjennomføres slik det er beskrevet i søknaden, endringssøknad, oppdatert protokoll og de bestemmelser som følger av helseforskningsloven med forskrifter.

### **Sluttmelding**

Prosjektleder skal sende sluttmelding til REK på eget skjema via REK-portalen senest 6 måneder etter sluttdato 31.12.2025, jf. helseforskningsloven § 12. Dersom prosjektet ikke starter opp eller gjennomføres meldes dette også via skjemaet for sluttmelding.

### **Søknad om endring**

Dersom man ønsker å foreta vesentlige endringer i formål, metode, tidsløp eller

organisering må prosjektleder sende søknad om endring via portalen på eget skjema til REK, jf. helseforskningsloven § 11.

**Klageadgang**

Du kan klage på REKs vedtak, jf. forvaltningsloven § 28 flg. Klagen sendes på eget skjema via REK portalen. Klagefristen er tre uker fra du mottar dette brevet. Dersom REK opprettholder vedtaket, sender REK klagen videre til Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for medisin og helsefag (NEM) for endelig vurdering, jf. forskningsetikkloven § 10 og helseforskningsloven § 10.

Med vennlig hilsen

Pål Aukrust  
Prof. Dr. med.  
Komitéleder REK sør-øst D

Anne Åbyholm-Brodal  
førstekonsulent REK sør-øst

*Kopi til:*

Norges idrettshøgskole

# VIL DU DELTA I EN STUDIE SOM UNDERSØKER HVORDAN HØYINTENSIV TRENING PÅVIRKER HELSEN TIL MOR OG FOSTER?

## FORMÅLET MED PROSJEKTET OG HVORFOR DU BLIR SPURT

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt for å undersøke akutte effekter av høyintensiv trening på ulike helsevariabler hos mor og foster. Du inviteres til å delta fordi du som gravid toppidrettsutøver eller kvinne med høyt aktivitetsnivå kan hjelpe oss å fylle viktige kunnskapshull relatert til høyintensiv trening i svangerskapet.

## HVA INNEBÆRER PROSJEKTET FOR DEG?

Deltakelse vil innebære at du gjennomfører tre høyintensive fysiske tester; løping på tredemølle, sykling og styrketrening. Testingen vil foregå over to dager når du er i svangerskapsuke 26-35.

Den første dagen måles ditt blodtrykk, vekt, høyde, kroppssammensetning ved hjelp av kaliperklype og lungefunksjon gjennom spirometri. En gynekolog utfører en kontroll av fosterets vekst og trivsel, og måler symfyse-fundusmål. Denne dagen gjennomføres også løpetesten på følgende måte: 10 minutters oppvarming etterfulgt av 3-5 høyintensive intervaller a 5 minutters varighet og med 4 minutters pause mellom hvert intervalldrag. I pausen mellom intervalldragene tar vi en liten dråpe blod fra fingertuppen din for å måle laktat i blodet og en gynekolog måler fosterets hjerterefrekvens og blodstrøm gjennom livmoren ved hjelp av ultralyd utenpå magen. Underveis i løpingen måler vi også kroppstemperatur, hjerterefrekvens, oksygenopptak og oksygenmetning. Målingene på dag 1 vil ta ca. 1,5 timer.

Den andre dagen skal du gjennomføre sykkel- og styrketestene. Sykkeltesten foregår på samme måte som løpetesten (beskrevet over). På styrketreningen gjennomfører du tre basisøvelser; sumo-markløft, benkpress og skrå benkpress. I hver øvelse gjennomføres det 3 sett med 8 repetisjoner. Motstanden skal være så tung at du kun klarer ytterligere én repetisjon. Gynekologen måler fosterets verdier på samme måte som underveis i løpetesten både under sykkeltesten og mellom styrkeøvelsene. Målingene på dag 2 vil ta ca. 2-2,5 timer.

Testene gjennomføres av kvalifiserte fysiologer og en gynekolog som er medisinsk ansvarlig for prosjektet. Alle tester avbrytes dersom du eller fosteret viser tegn til negative avvik.

Du vil motta informasjon om dine testresultater etter du er ferdig med testingen på dag 2. Samtidig vil du svare på et elektronisk spørreskjema om din helse, graviditet, trening før og under svangerskapet, skader, spisevaner og livskvalitet. Vi vil også stille deg noen spørsmål om dine tanker og opplevelser rundt det å gjennomføre maksimale og submaksimale tester som gravid. Seks uker etter fødsel vil vi også gjennomføre et kort telefonintervju om din fødselsopplevelse og fødselsutfall, og vi vil derfor be om ditt telefonnummer på siste side.

## MULIGE FORDELER OG ULEMPER

Deltakelse vil ikke innebære noen risiko eller medisinske ulemper for deg eller ditt ufødte barn, utover at du må sette av litt tid på de to testdagene. Både din og fosterets helse og velvære vil være godt ivaretatt, og

medisinsk ansvarlig og prosjektansvarlig vil være til stede for å svare på spørsmål du eventuelt vil ha underveis. Gynekologen vil henvise deg til videre undersøkelser dersom hun anser at dette er nødvendig.

#### FRIVILLIG DELTAKELSE OG MULIGHET FOR Å TREKKE DITT SAMTYKKE

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Dersom du ønsker å delta, undertegner du samtykkeerklæringen på siste side. Du kan når som helst og uten å oppgi noen grunn trekke ditt samtykke. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Dersom du trekker tilbake samtykket, vil det ikke forskes videre på dine opplysninger. Du kan kreve innsyn i opplysningene som er lagret om deg, og disse vil da utleveres innen 30 dager. Du kan også kreve at dine opplysninger i prosjektet slettes. Adgangen til å kreve destruksjon, sletting eller utlevering gjelder ikke dersom opplysningene er anonymisert eller publisert. Denne adgangen kan også begrenses dersom opplysningene er inngått i utførte analyser.

Dersom du senere ønsker å trekke deg eller har spørsmål til prosjektet, kan du kontakte prosjektleder (se kontakinformasjon på siste side).

#### HVA SKJER MED OPPLYSNINGENE OM DEG?

Opplysningene som registreres om deg skal kun brukes slik som beskrevet under formålet med prosjektet. Prosjektet avsluttes i 2025 og da anonymiseres alle data. Resultater fra undersøkelsen vil bli publisert i internasjonale idrettsmedisinske og idrettspsykologiske tidsskrifter. Resultatene fremstilles da på gruppenivå og er ikke identifiserbare. Dette vil også være gjeldene for idrettsgren, som kun vil beskrives på idrettsgruppenivå. Opplysningene vil også inngå i studentoppgaver, men studentene vil ikke ha tilgang til direkte identifiserbare opplysninger om deg. Eventuelle utvidelser i bruk og oppbevaringstid kan kun skje etter godkjenning fra REK og andre relevante myndigheter. Du har rett til innsyn i hvilke opplysninger som er registrert om deg og rett til å få korrigerert eventuelle feil i de opplysningene som er registrert. Du har også rett til å få innsyn i sikkerhetstiltakene ved behandling av opplysningene. Du kan klage på behandlingen av dine opplysninger til Datatilsynet og institusjonen sitt personvernombud.

Alle opplysningene vil bli behandlet uten navn og fødselsnummer eller andre direkte gjenkjennende opplysninger (=kodete opplysninger). En kode knytter deg til dine opplysninger gjennom en navneliste. Det er kun prosjektleder Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad og doktorgradsstipendiat Emilie Mass Dalhaug som har tilgang til denne listen.

Etter at forskningsprosjektet er ferdig, vil opplysningene om deg bli oppbevart i fem år av kontrollhensyn.

#### FORSIKRING

Deltakere i prosjektet er forsikret dersom det skulle oppstå skade eller komplikasjoner som følge av deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet. Norges idrettshøgskole (NIH) er en statlig institusjon som innebærer at NIH dekker en eventuell erstatning og ikke et forsikringsselskap. For skade på mennesker som oppstår under medisinske forsøk, gjelder pasientskadeloven.

#### GODKJENNINGER

Regional komité for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskningsetikk har gjort en forskningsetisk vurdering og godkjent prosjektet (saksnummer: 478976).

Norges idrettshøgskole og prosjektleder Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad er ansvarlig for personvernet i prosjektet.

Vi behandler opplysningene basert på ditt samtykke.

#### KONTAKTOPPLYSNINGER

Dersom du har spørsmål til prosjektet eller ønsker å trekke deg fra deltakelse, kan du kontakte prosjektleder Lene Annette Hagen Haakstad, tlf. +47 23262390, e-post: [lahaakstad@nih.no](mailto:lahaakstad@nih.no) eller doktorgradsstipendiat Emilie Mass Dalhaug, tlf. 91708426, e-post: [emiliefm@nih.no](mailto:emiliefm@nih.no).

Dersom du har spørsmål om personvernet i prosjektet, kan du kontakte personvernombudet ved institusjonen: [rolf.haavik@habberstad.no](mailto:rolf.haavik@habberstad.no)

JEG SAMTYKKER TIL Å DELTA I PROSJEKTET OG TIL AT MINE PERSONOPPLYSNINGER  
BRUKES SLIK DET ER BESKREVET

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Sted og dato

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Deltakers signatur

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Deltakers navn med trykte bokstaver

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Deltakers telefonnummer