

Consuming extra calories can help exercising women avoid menstrual disorders

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Exercising women who struggle to consume enough calories and have menstrual disorders can simply increase their food intake to recover their menstrual cycle, according to a study accepted for presentation at

ENDO 2020, the Endocrine Society's annual meeting, and publication in the *Journal of the Endocrine Society*.

The study found that exercising [women](#) with [menstrual disorders](#) can start menstruating again by consuming an additional 300-400 calories a day.

"These findings can impact all exercising women, because many women strive to exercise for competitive and health-related reasons but may not be getting enough calories to support their exercise," said lead researcher Mary Jane De Souza, Ph.D., of Penn State University.

By consuming enough calories, exercising women with menstrual disorders can avoid complications associated with a condition known as the Female Athlete Triad, De Souza said. This is a medical condition that starts with inadequate [food intake](#) that fails to meet the body's needs. It leads to menstrual disorders and poor bone health. It is associated with a high incidence of stress fractures.

The study included 62 young, exercising women with infrequent menstrual periods. Thirty-two women increased their calorie intake an average of 300-400 calories a day, and 30 maintained their exercise and eating habits for the 12-month study. Women who consumed the extra calories were twice as likely to have their menstrual period during the study compared with the women who maintained their regular exercise and eating routine.

"This strategy is easy to implement with the help of a nutritionist. It does not require a prescription and avoids complications from drug therapy," De Souza said. "The findings will encourage [healthcare providers](#) to try to help exercising women with menstrual disorders who consume too few calories to eat more, and this may help them to be healthier athletes and avoid bone complications."

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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