

Don't let your period keep you down – with Eilish McColgan

Submitted by: Nelsons

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The average woman will have approximately 500 periods in her lifetime lasting anywhere between 2 and 7 days. That's potentially a whopping 3,500 days or 9 and ½ years spent dealing with Mother Nature's monthly call! If that's not enough to see you reaching for the nearest chocolate bar for comfort, then what is!

But as much as chocolate and the lure of the sofa might be overwhelming it's no way to spend potentially 9 years of your life! So, just because we may be lacking a little in energy and feeling tired it shouldn't stop us getting out there and making the most of life.

Someone who knows this only too well, is triple Olympian and recently crowned BT Sports Action Woman of the year Eilish McColgan. We sat down with our 2022 Brand ambassador to talk all things periods and how to keep on top of your game, no matter the time of the month.

Spatone: How do you find periods effect you physically? Or have an effect on your performance?

Eilish: Periods have a huge impact on my performance. I always feel really heavy legged and flat a few days before my period. I suffer from bad stomach cramps, a sore back and being bloated. All of which just makes you feel a little rubbish. The stomach cramps are the most debilitating and often I have to take loads of painkillers and sleep it off - which isn't very conducive to running fast! Mentally I also just feel drained and more anxious - almost like I can't switch off. It's definitely a challenge when my period lands around a big competition!

Spatone: How do you find periods effect your emotional health?

Eilish: I'm much more prepared now because I know what to expect but it's still frustrating when you feel like you're fighting against your own body and when it affects your work. I'm definitely more stressed and anxious. I find it difficult to switch off. I feel like there's always things that I should be doing - like a to do list that's never ending. I also just feel tired and drained which makes me a bit more snappy - when normally I'm very laid back and relaxed.

Spatone: How has the conversation around female athletes and menstruation shifted since you started competing?

Eilish: I posted on social media about dropping out of a race a few years ago due to my period, and I couldn't believe the number of women writing underneath in the comments. I think it's a common misconception that athletes just don't have periods and don't deal with this issue every month - because typically no one speaks about it. But actually, it's affecting a huge number of us! It's just that in the past, everyone shied away from having this conversation. It was a taboo back in the day but conversations are far more open now and so they should be! It might be your wife, your sister, your mum who deals with these issues every month but has struggled in silence. Having these discussions gives us the best opportunity of finding better solutions for all women! More and more athletes are coming forward with their own stories which will only help the next generation of young women.

Spatone: Do you still see menstruation as a taboo subject within the sports world?

Eilish: Yes and no. I personally don't see it as taboo and neither do a lot of the athletes I speak to. But when we post about it online and it's reported within a sports media outlet or news outlet - it's scary the number of ill-informed comments and just downright nonsense that people come out with. It's scary and makes me realise that actually, for a lot of people, they have no idea about this subject and also don't even think we should be speaking about it in public. So quite clearly it is still taboo for some! But this is 2022. We need to keep having these discussions whether people like it or not.

Spatone: What tips do you have for preparing for a competition whilst on your period?

Eilish: I keep a training diary and write down my cycle, so that I can track it and see similarities from month to month. It gives me a better understanding of my body and cycle and what to expect around specific days. I completely avoid gym work, as that tightens my lower back and hamstrings which can increase the risk of injury. I find that removing all strength work around my period, gives my legs a chance of being a bit less heavy on race day. Lots of sleep and I take painkillers when needed. But in the lead up to competition, I'll start a few days out so that my symptoms don't get too bad. I always make sure I'm taking Spatone each day, but especially around my period!

Spatone: How do you avoid fatigue and that sluggish feeling during your period?

Eilish: These feelings are to be expected but I aim to reduce them by really scaling back the intensity of my running, removing gym work and putting more focus on recovery and sleep. I also focus on getting some good food into me - eating whenever I'm hungry and appreciate that I need to be kinder to my body. Spatone is always my go to for a little energy boost - it's nice to be reassured that I'm keeping my iron levels topped up during that time of the month.

Spatone: What are your go-to foods for that time of the month?

Eilish: There's nothing in particular I eat that's different from any other month, but I do notice my intake is greater. I just crave certain things a little more than normal. But my rule is that if I'm hungry- and I want it- I'll eat it. So if I want toast at 2am in the morning- you can rest assured that I'll be eating it!

Spatone liquid iron contains natural, iron rich water sourced from Snowdonia National Park. The iron in Spatone can help top up iron levels whilst causing fewer of the unpleasant side effects often experienced with conventional iron food supplements. Iron is an important mineral that contributes to a normal energy yielding metabolism and helps to reduce tiredness and fatigue.

Spatone is available in two variants: Spatone Original natural iron rich water and Spatone Apple with Vitamin C. This combines the iron rich water with apple concentrate and Vitamin C which helps the absorption of iron. Available in 14 and 28 Day packs, Spatone is packaged in convenient single-use sachets, ideal for on-the-go use.

Spatone and Spatone Apple 28 Day are available from Boots (£13.00), Holland & Barrett (£13.49 and £14.49) and www.amazon.co.uk.

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