

## Buggy Guidance for Leaders

Whilst this guidance is aimed predominantly at Mum's returning to running, we recognise that runners other than mum's and parents may run with a buggy, the buggy guidance still applies and 'carer' can be used interchangeably for Mum or parent.

There are many reasons why a new mum wants to start or return to running after having a baby. This document offers guidance to UKA Leaders to make sure that both the new mum and baby remain safe and enjoy all the benefits running offers.

Things you need to consider are: the mum, the baby, the buggy, the route and other runners or members of the public.

### The mum

GPs and midwife's can offer advice about when to start running after having a baby as every mother, child and birth can have a different experience. This advice should be taken prior to commencing any running fitness activity. You may wish to use our [PARQ template for expectant or new mums](#).

Other things to be aware of about a new Mum are:

- Breastfeeding – this can mean longer presence of lower oestrogen levels and increased relaxin levels. What does this mean? This means that the mum is at an increased risk of injury due to relaxed ligaments and any activity needs to be low intensity. Walking followed by Power walking, then the Couch to 5 k programmes are a good place to start with movement skills such as balance and co-ordination activities and foundation movements such as squats and lunges in the warm up.
- Changes to the body – It is good practice to advise any new mum to wear supportive clothing such as a professionally fitted sports bra
- Sleep – Sleep is key for recovery both mentally and physically and can be disrupted for a new mum. Sleep deprivation is associated with increased injury risk, lower general health and increases in stress.
- Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S) is a condition of low energy and can increase the risk of injuries for new mums. As a Leader, consider the intensity and duration of the activity to ensure you do not make a new mum at risk of this condition worse and signpost the new mum to a health professional if you are concerned.

**The baby.** Although the baby is the parent's responsibility as good practice the following guidance can be offered:

- Advise the parent to ensure the baby is dressed and protected appropriately for the weather. The baby will not be moving like the runner and so will need more clothing than the runner. Bringing a rain cover and spare blanket is a good idea.
- Advise the parent to bring food and drink for the baby appropriate to their age as well as water and snack for themselves.
- Advise the parent to ensure the buggy is suitable for the age of the baby and that their head is supported.
- Advise the parent that the length of the run should be a suitable length of time for the child to be strapped in a buggy.

**Using the running buggy.** Although the buggy and baby are the parent's responsibility as good practice the following guidance can be offered:

- The baby's safety is the most important thing, so make sure that your speed is such that
- Never take a chance crossing a road and slow down or stop to go up or down kerbs, ramps and over speed bumps.
- Ensure your buggy's handle is at waist height (this is where your arms would swing naturally when running). Do not lean on the handle, but guide the buggy forward using the palm of your hand and wrist
- Ensure the front wheels of your buggy are in the lock position to make them sturdier and provide a smoother / safer ride for the baby.
- Make sure the buggy baby straps are fastened correctly ensuring the baby is the comfortable but can't wriggle out of them.

**The running buggy.** Although the running buggy is the parent's responsibility as good practice the following guidance can be offered:

- A running buggy can be used when the baby can support their own head (from about 5-6 months). They are light weight and generally have three wheels / tyres and a suspension. The wheels / tyres are filled with air and bigger than a standard buggy, which helps with a smoother ride and they tend to have a five point safety harness, hand brake and non-fixed front wheel. This wheel should be fixed when running over terrain that is not smooth or when going up and down kerbs.
- A running buggy should be suitable for the terrain and the age of the child.

**The running position.** Although you are not a technical running coach, as a Leader you can provide guidance on a safe running position to the parent:

- Keep your body at a comfortable distance from the buggy with an upright posture
- Guide the buggy with your palm and wrist (don't lean on or push down on the handle)
- Make sure the handle is at waist height
- Run with one hand on the buggy and use the other arm in a normal driving backwards action. Swop arms every 50-100 metres or more regularly depending on wrist strength
- On terrain that is not smooth or flat and when going around corners always use two hands and a wrist strap
- Keep your shoulders relaxed
- Keep your stride length shorter than normal as this will give you more control of the buggy.

**Route and risk planning.** Always follow usual risk assessment and safety provision planning for your runners and in addition risk assess the route for buggy suitability considering the following guidance:

- The surface should be smooth and flat. Hills and kerbs add strain to already lax ligaments
- Start off walking or on slow short runs and increase using the C25K programme as a guide
- If you are not using a smooth flat surface, wrist straps should be mandatory
- Try and avoid busy roads and crossing roads where possible, but if using these ensure there is a wide footpath and safety provision is made, communicated and overseen for crossing the road
- Consider and plan for emergency first aid provision