

# Divarication of rectus abdominis muscle postpartum

## Information and advice

For some women, pregnancy can cause separation of the stomach muscles which can also be referred to as Diastasis Recti. The right and left sides of the rectus abdominis muscle ('six pack muscle') separate at the linea alba which connects the two sides of the muscle together.

It is normal in pregnancy for the stomach muscles to separate as the uterus continues to grow and push on the abdominal wall. This only becomes problematic in pregnancy when the abdominal wall is weak.

The abdominal muscles are an important muscle group in supporting your back. If they remain weak after pregnancy, it can increase your risk of suffering from back pain.

## How to know if you have a separation

Most pregnant women will have a separation of one or two fingers width after pregnancy and this is normal.

In most cases this will spontaneously recover and will not cause you any problems.

However if the gap is more than two fingers width and you have a visible doming at the midline, you may have a divarication of the abdominis muscle and would benefit from seeing a physiotherapist.

You can measure this yourself by lying with your knees bent and using your fingers as a guide at the level of your belly button.

## Treatment

Try to avoid all activities which place a lot of pressure on your abdominal wall, or cause an over stretch to your stomach.

### Movements to avoid

- Abdominal crunches/sit ups
- Carrying heavy objects
- Carrying your child on your hip
- Rising from lying to sitting by pulling up and twisting

When getting out of bed, roll onto your side and use your arms to push you up. Do the reverse for getting back into bed.

This makes sure you are not putting excessive pressure through your abdomen.

## Basic exercises to help the severity of Divarication

The following exercises require you to recruit your pelvic floor and a deep abdominal muscle called transverse abdominis. These muscles act as a corset and help to give the pelvis and spine stability.

1. Lying on your back with your knees bent, let your tummy relax
2. Take a breath in, as you breathe out draw up the lower part of your abdomen towards your spine. Squeeze your pelvic floor at the same time
3. Aim to hold the contraction for five to ten seconds and relax. Your back and pelvis should remain still throughout the exercise
4. Repeat this exercise five to ten times with a short rest in between each contraction

## Pelvic tilting

This exercise helps to make sure you are maintaining a good posture

1. Lying on your back with your knees bent, let your tummy relax
2. Take a deep breath in, as you breathe out draw up the lower part of your abdomen towards your spine, squeezing your pelvic floor at the same time
3. As you do this, tilt your pelvis to lower the arch of your back into the bed, keeping your shoulders and neck relaxed. Hold for five seconds and release
4. Repeat the exercise five to ten times

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## How to contact us

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