

## Rehabilitation Department

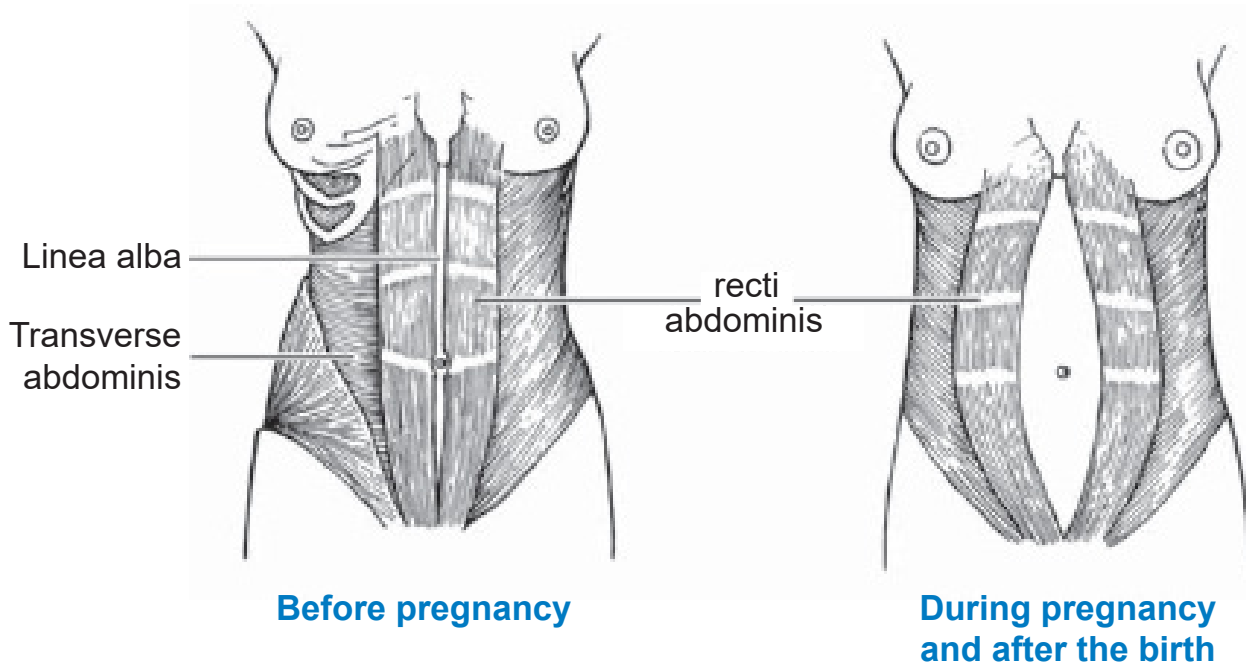
# Divarication of Rectus Abdominis Muscles (DRAM) – Diastasis Recti Advice and Exercises

### Changes in the abdominal muscles during pregnancy

The abdominal muscles keep the internal organs in place as well as supporting the spine. In pregnancy they also support the growing baby and uterus. The abdominal muscles and ligaments stretch throughout pregnancy under the influence of the hormones Progesterone and Relaxin.

The Rectus Abdominis muscles (see illustration) pass from the ribs and breastbone to the pubic bones. These muscles are held together by a band (Linea Alba). This band also softens and stretches as the abdomen enlarges and often allows the Recti to move apart. This separation is called Diastasis or Divarication of the Recti.

### Changes in the abdominal muscles

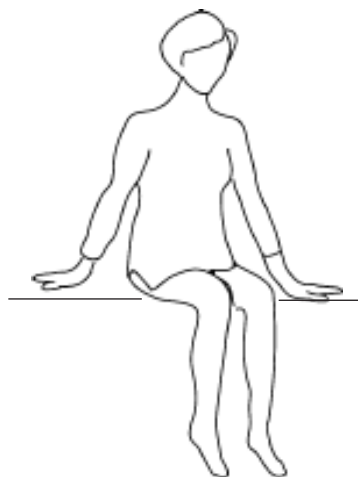


## Advice

After the birth of your baby, your abdominal muscles will feel weak and stretched.

Avoid movements which cause peaking or doming of the abdomen and may prevent the separation recovering, such as:

- **Sitting straight up** e.g. when getting out of the bath or bed.
  - Instead try “log rolling”. This method of getting in and out of bed puts the least strain on your abdomen and back. To get out of bed bend your knees and roll onto your side (try to turn your upper and lower body at the same time and avoid twisting). Use your arms to push yourself up into a sitting position, allowing your legs to swing down at the same time. Reverse the procedure to get back into bed.



- **Stooping and bending.** Don't reach down to the floor by bending in the middle, instead try squatting or going down on one knee.
- **Heavy Lifting.** The weight of your baby should be the heaviest thing you are lifting.
  - Take care when lifting your baby or anything else. Use your legs, bend your knees, keep a straight back and get close.
  - Avoid lifting toddlers. If you have other children you will obviously want to give them attention so try to squat down to their level or encourage them to climb up and sit beside you instead.

## Exercises

There are two gentle exercises we would suggest to tone/strengthen the deep stabilizing muscles whilst the separation reduces.

Your physiotherapist will check your progress and monitor the gap between the muscles before giving you other abdominal exercises to practise. The physiotherapist in some cases may also fit you with some elasticated abdominal support in order to encourage recovery. These are explained in more detail on the next page.

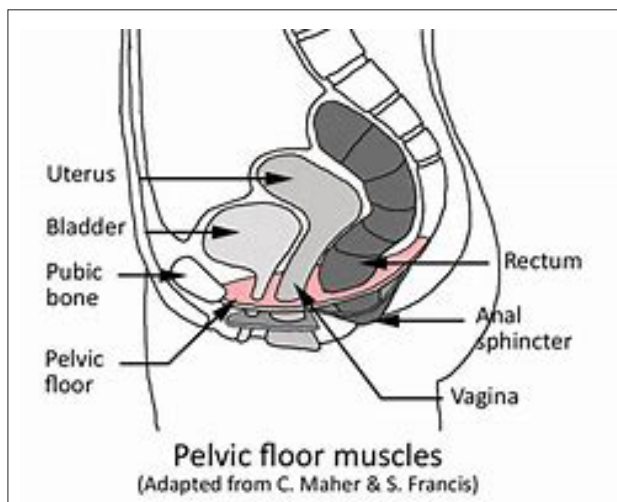
## Transversus Abdominis

Take a breath in, and then as you breathe out gently draw in your abdominal muscles below your tummy button (imagine you are taking in a notch on a low slung belt). Hold this for several seconds whilst breathing normally. Repeat 5-10 times resting between each pull-in. Try to do this exercise several times a day in sitting, side lying or standing.

Most importantly remember to tighten this muscle when you lift anything including your baby, change position (e.g. getting out of bed) and when pushing the pram.

This muscle works with the pelvic floor muscles, so you could exercise them together.

## Pelvic Floor Exercises



The pelvic floor is like a hammock/sling suspended from inside the front of your pelvis to the coccyx.

These muscles are very important as they support the pelvic organs in position and prevent leakage from the bladder and bowel. These muscles are also weakened in pregnancy and childbirth.

## The Basic Pelvic Floor Exercise

Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time trying to stop your flow of urine. The feeling is one of “squeeze and lift”, closing and drawing-up the back and the front passages. This is called a pelvic floor contraction.

### There are two ways to work them:

1. Hold for up to a maximum of 10 seconds and repeat up to 10 times.
2. Squeeze and lift, then let go quickly. Again, repeat up to 10 times.

Try to exercise the pelvic floor 3 times a day either in sitting, standing or lying. (Practicing them whilst feeding your baby can help you remember to do these).

Each time you exercise, the muscles become stronger and more supportive. You should also contract them before lifting and coughing.

Scan the QR code below to take you to our website.



<http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/>

**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

Physiotherapy Department  
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary  
Telephone No: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office  
Telephone No: 01484 905380

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

ਚ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"