Rehabilitation Department

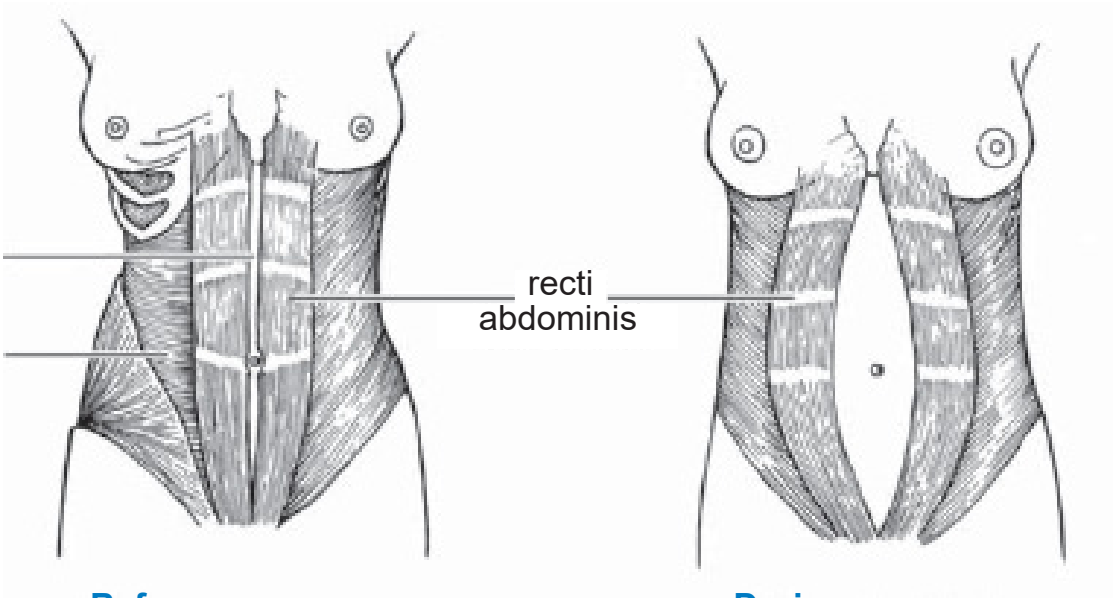
Divarication of Rectus Abdominis Muscles (DRAM) – Diastasis Recti Advice and Exercises

Changes in the abdominal muscles during pregnancy

The abdominal muscles support the internal organs and the spine.
In pregnancy they also support the growing baby and uterus. The abdominal muscles and ligaments stretch throughout pregnancy.

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



compassionate care

Advice

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

Avoid movements which cause peaking or doming of the abdomen and may prevent the separation recovering.

- **Getting out of bed/ Sitting up**
- Bend your knees and roll onto your side, try to move both your upper and lower body at the same time to avoid twisting. Use your arms to push yourself up into a sitting position, allowing your legs to swing down at the same time. You can reverse this to get 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 until the peaking or doming or has resolved
  - 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 below,that you can start to do. We would suggest to tone/strengthen the deep stabilizing muscles whilst the separation reduces.

Your physiotherapist will check your progress and monitor the function of your tummy muscles and the gap 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.

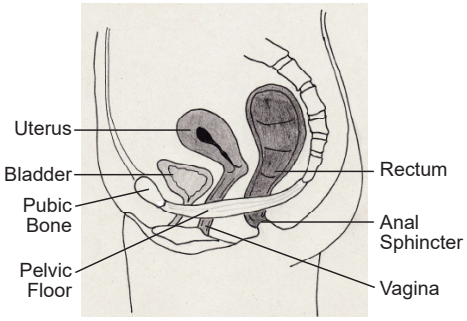
Transversus Abdominis

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 or zipping up a tight pair of jeans). 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.

Pelvic Floor Exercises

Looking after your pelvic floor muscles is essential – following the birth and throughout your life. Initially, exercising them could help reduce discomfort and swelling. Longer term, toning up the muscles may prevent leakage from your bladder or bowel. It can also help safeguard against vaginal prolapse and may improve your sex life.



Pelvic Floor Muscles

The Basic Pelvic Floor Exercise

Choose any comfortable position, with your knees slightly apart. Many people find lying down with their knees bent is a good position to start or sitting on a hard surface.

Tighten up your back passage as though you are trying to stop passing wind. Then tighten the muscles that you would use to stop yourself passing urine. Do these 2 together and you should be exercising your pelvic floor muscles.

The feeling is one of “squeeze and lift”.

Remember:

You should start gently and stop if it hurts. Do not pull your stomach in excessively, squeeze your legs together, tighten your buttocks or hold your breath.

The Pelvic Floor Exercise Programme

Now that you can do the basic exercise you can build up the endurance of the muscles so they will work harder and longer. Firstly though you need to determine your **‘starting block’**.

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as previously described and hold for as long as you can (maximum 10 seconds).

How many seconds can you hold this contraction?

Relax the contraction and rest for 5-10 seconds.
Then repeat the ‘tighten, hold and relax’ movement as many times as you can (maximum of 10).

How many times can you repeat this?

This is your **‘starting block’**.

Now perform the basic exercise but squeeze and lift more firmly, and then let go straight away. This is called a quick contraction and will help your muscles react quickly when you cough, sneeze or lift etc.

How many quick contractions can you do?

Aim to increase this to a maximum of 10.

You should try to repeat your starting block and quick contractions 3 times a day.
Your starting block will change as the muscles get stronger, therefore re-assess this every few weeks.

Web Address

https://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/womens-health/perinatal-pelvic-health-service

QR Code

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

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Telephone No: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office

Telephone No: 01484 905380

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

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