

Rehabilitation Department

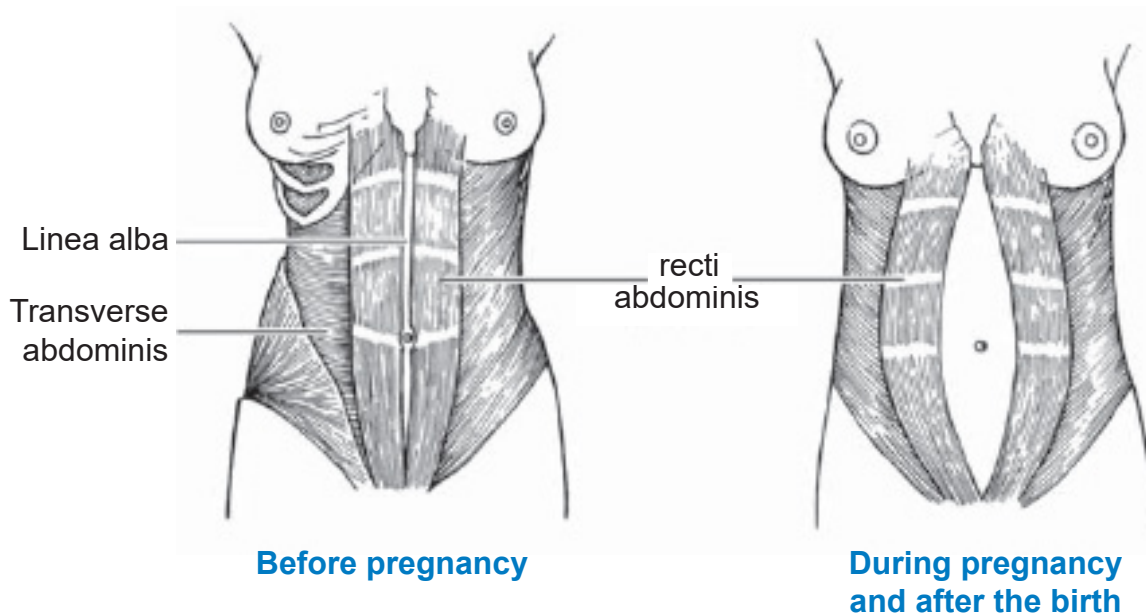
Divarication of Rectus Abdominis Muscles (DRAM) – Diastasis Recti Advice and Exercises

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. It will be checked postnatally by your midwife or physiotherapist and you will be offered outpatient treatment if the separation does not resolve itself quickly and is found to be 5cm or more.

Changes in the abdominal muscles

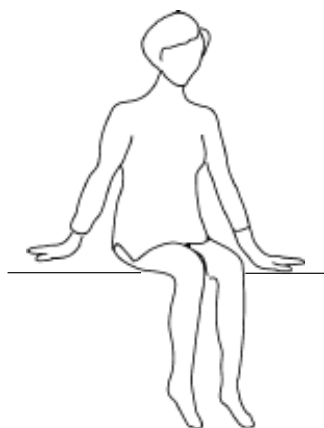


Treatment

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.

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.

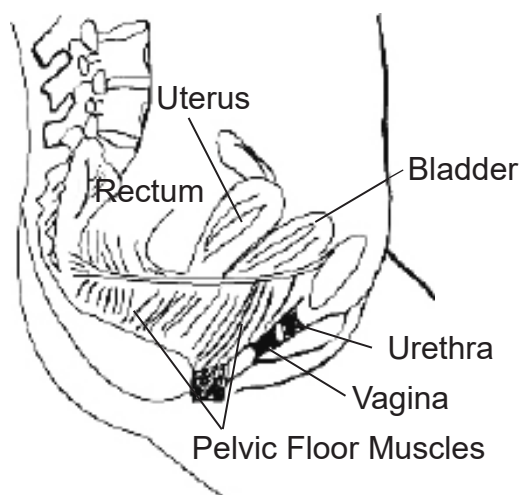
Transversus Abdominis

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. There are deep and superficial layers and fast and slow fibres.

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

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

The action is to squeeze and lift them; drawing up the back and front passages as though you are trying to control wind and the flow of urine.

There are two ways to work them:

1. Hold for as long as you can and repeat up to 10 times.
2. Squeeze and lift then let go quickly. Again, repeat up to 10 times.

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

References

Sheppard, S (1996) The role of Transversus Abdominus in post partum correct of gross divarication recti. *Manual Therapy*, 1 (4), 214-216

Cottie, ME and Harris, BA (2004) Physical Therapy treatment for Diastasis Recti. *Journal of Association of Physiotherapists in Women's Health*, 28 (2), 11-15

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

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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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براہ کرم مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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