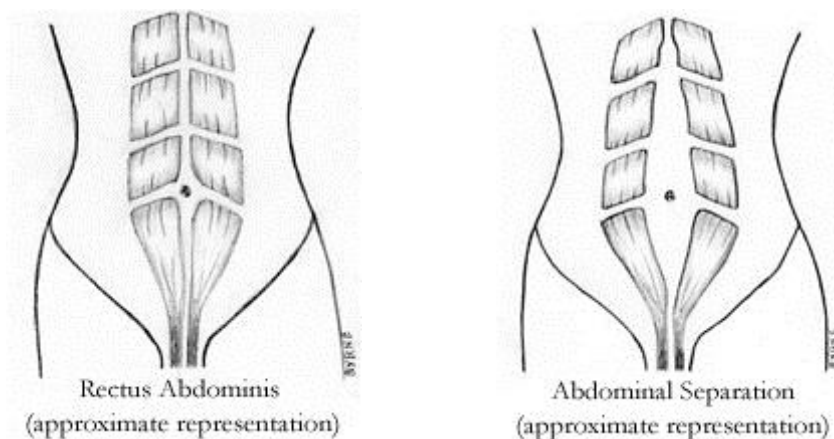


Diastasis Recti

There are four abdominal muscles. The Outermost layer, called *rectus abdominis*, consists of two bands of muscles that run down the middle of your abdomen. During and following pregnancy, a separation of this muscle can occur. This is known as **diastasis recti**.

A small separation (2-3 fingers width) will return to normal especially if you work on the correct abdominal exercises. If the gap is larger than this, you should ask to be referred to the physiotherapist. A large gap is associated with poor abdominal support for your back. This can give rise to poor posture and backache.

To test for diastasis recti, watch for a bulge above or below the navel during exercises such as sit-ups or when getting out of bed. If there is a bulge, you should avoid any exercises or activities that increase the bulge.



EXERCISES

The **Transversus Abdominis (TrA)** muscle is the innermost layer of your abdominal muscles. It is the major stability muscle for your lower back. It acts as a muscular corset to stiffen the spine before any movement you make. TrA exercises are very effective at helping diastasis recti.



A **gentle** and **slow** contraction is all that is required to activate TrA. Strong contractions will activate other large muscles and will make TrA work less, not more.

The **pelvic floor muscles** form a sling that supports the pelvic organs. These muscles work with TrA to stabilise the pelvis and lower part of the spine. Often TrA will contract automatically when the pelvic floor muscles are contracted. Try to draw up and hold the pelvic floor muscles (as if to stop the flow of urine when going to the toilet). You should feel a definite “lift”.

Training Guidelines

- Lie on your back with your knees bent up
- Take a breath in, then breathe out slowly, Letting your tummy totally relax
- Stop breathing for a moment
- **Slowly** and **gently** draw in your lower abdomen (from the belly button down). Feel the muscles tighten under your fingers gently
- Hold this contraction while you resume breathing in and out
- Hold for 5 seconds initially then relax. **Rest** for 10 seconds between contractions initially
- Repeat 10 times

Getting up from Lying

1. Set your TrA
2. Roll onto one side
3. Prop yourself into sitting using your arms and drop your legs over the side of the bed
4. Lower your feet to the floor and push up with your hands