

Diastasis Recti

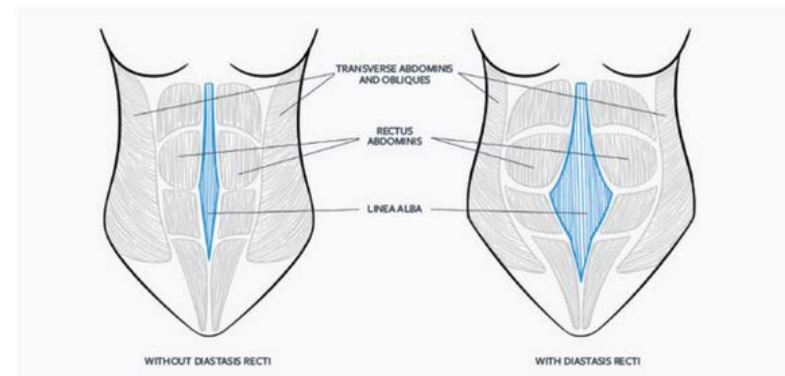
What is it?

Diastasis recti is the term that refers to the separation of your abdominal muscles which can (but not always) occur during pregnancy. Some degree of separation is inevitable and completely normal to allow for baby to grow during the pregnancy. It is when the connective tissue (the linea alba) becomes more lax, stretches and thins out, and therefore becomes weak to allow for baby growth. If you are pregnant, you can possibly prevent a wider diastasis by being conscious of maintaining optimal posture and alignment to support your core to function correctly and safely. You could also include a pregnancy safe exercise program into your lifestyle, and strive to nourish your body with optimal pregnancy nutrition.

Once baby is born, you may be left with a weakened and stretched 'squishy' gap down the centre of your stomach above and/or below your belly button which needs to be re-strengthened to help your core function correctly to support the rest of your body to function optimally.

To perform a self-assessment to see if you might have a Diastasis recti [click here](#).

The optimal time post pregnancy to assess if you have a diastasis is at least two to three weeks after birth; this allows your uterus to have time to contract back down. The awesome news is however that most ladies naturally heal their diastasis by about eight weeks postpartum without intervention. If however it is not healed by then you will likely still continue to have this separation at the 12 months postpartum mark. This does not mean you are



safe to jump back into any old core exercises, you should follow a progressive postnatal specific program to help train your deep core muscles to function effectively again after being stretched during pregnancy.

You might find that you have a gap but it might be quite strong rather than soft and squishy, therefore this would be an indication that you have a 'Functional Diastasis Recti'.

You can use our self- assessment and data record sheet to record and monitor your progress, see form at bottom of file.

It is important to note that a natural width of 0.5 – 2 cm (approx. 1 finger width) is completely normal and therefore should not be cause for concern.

Why is it important to rehabilitate?

To help improve the function of your Diastasis there are plenty of exercises you can do to rehabilitate your core muscles and re-strengthen your linea alba. It is important to do this because an appropriately functioning core is the foundation to all other movements you perform in your daily lives. Rehabilitating your core and developing a functioning diastasis recti again will help support better posture, therefore reduce aches and pains and develop better strength throughout your body.

What improvements are you looking for during your rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation isn't necessarily about closing the gap, but more about strengthening and thickening your linea alba, the bit that is soft and squishy. We want to perform appropriate diastasis recti safe exercises to develop good strong tension of your linea alba to achieve effective function of your core muscles.

How to rehabilitate your core if you have diastasis recti

Perform exercises gradually progressing from basic posture, alignment, core and pelvic floor connection exercises to advanced core exercises. It is also important to ensure you nutrition is optimal to help with cellular tissue repair by including adequate amounts of protein in your diet. A

great way to do this is have a serving/ or half portion of protein in each meal or snack. It is a good idea to avoid exercises where your front is facing the ground until you improve your core control. Also avoid exercises like crunches where you are increasing intra-abdominal pressure throughout the exercise. To monitor if an exercise is causing too much pressure on your diastasis, look out for any bulging down the centre of your abdomen during an exercise by looking or feeling. This would be a sign you do not have adequate integrity of your linea alba to support your core. Therefore eliminate that exercise, reduce the level of core exercises you are working on and retry again in a couple of weeks. Remember to always use good alignment and core connection breathing techniques to help also. The exercises in my Re-energised Postnatal Recovery program are all safe exercises for healing your deep core muscles and to help with healing diastasis recti provided you are using the correct techniques and self-monitoring your core control throughout. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding your progress and techniques. There is also a specific section within the membership portal with more focused diastasis recti healing principles to support your healing.

Diastasis recti during pregnancy

It is very common for ladies to develop a diastasis by the 35th week of pregnancy of at least 16mm wide. To support your core muscles during the later stages of pregnancy and reduce the severity of a diastasis, avoid exercises with your stomach facing the ground such as planks and other high loaded core exercises such as crunches. It is also advisable to reduce the loading of any lifting during the third trimester to help maintain strong healthy core stability.

When to see a women's physiotherapist for your diastasis

I would recommend you see a women's physio for your diastasis if it is wider than 2 fingers and deeper than one knuckle while you are doing your connection breath. If you feel you have poor tension or have any other concerns about your abdominal muscles, a women's physio will be able to assess you further and provide further treatment or advice.

There are other options like supportive braces and compression shorts/tights that might provide some benefits also.

Use this table to record and monitor your diastasis.

Diastasis recti self- assessment data record	Date & measurement at your belly button	4-5cm above your belly button	4-5 cm below your belly button
What is the quality of the tissue on the scale (below) from 1-5?	1 st assessment: 2 nd assessment: 3 rd assessment: .....	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....
How many fingers wide is the tissue?	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....
How does the tension of the tissue feel on the scale from 1-5?	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....
How does the tension feel on the scale from 1-5 when you do the connection breath and reassess?	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....
Scale: 1 = super squishy, 3 = medium tension, 5 = strong tension (Record the date for each assessment and allow space for further assessments when you write in your recordings as in the first box eg.)			