



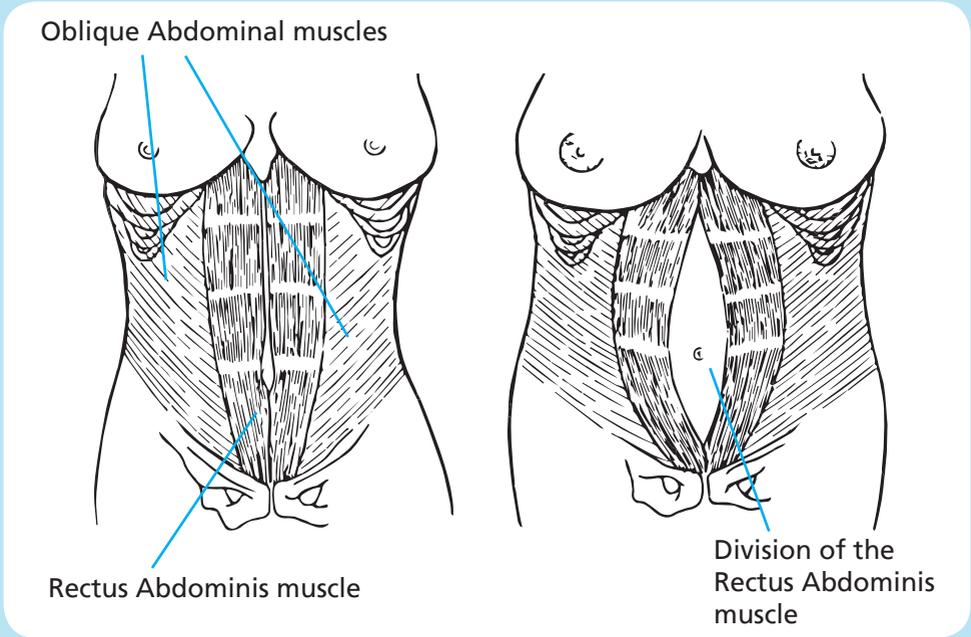
Separation of abdominal muscles

Patient information



Rectus Abdominis is one of your tummy muscles which attaches from the breast bone and ribs down to the pubic bones of the pelvis.

In some women the left and right halves of this muscle divide down the centre of the tummy during pregnancy, this is called `diastasis recti` or `divarication of Rectus Abdominis muscle (D.R.A.M).



It is more likely to occur with large babies, if there is excess fluid around the baby or in twin/triplet pregnancies. Other risk factors include: previous D.R.A.M, tight or over trained abdominal muscles and obesity.

For most women with separation of the tummy muscles the 2 muscle borders will close well, a gap of 1-2 fingers width is not a problem. However, if the gap is more than 2 fingers width (3cm) apart and the tummy bulges down the centre you will need to see a physiotherapist for specialised advice and exercise to improve tummy muscle support.

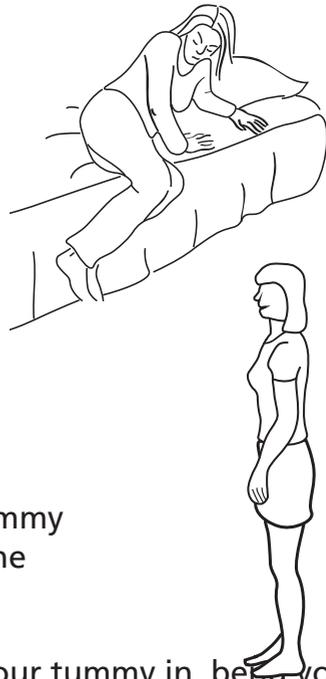
What should I avoid?

If these muscles remain weak you may be more likely to suffer from back pain. You should avoid:

- Sitting straight up from lying on your back until your muscles are stronger
- Unnecessary heavy lifting- i.e, nothing heavier than your baby
- Any exercises that cause the tummy to bulge, including sit-up type exercises until you have been seen by the physiotherapist.

What can I do to help myself?

- When getting up from lying flat, bend the knees, roll onto your side and push up sideways using your arms to help. Reverse this movement to lie down.
- Stand and walk tall with the tummy gently drawn in toward the spine
- When lifting your baby, draw your tummy in, bend your knees and keep baby close to you.
- Support your abdomen with your hands when coughing, laughing and sneezing.

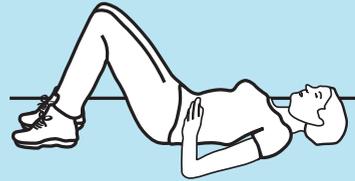


Exercises to strengthen the muscles

Deep tummy exercises

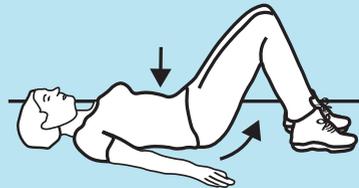
Lying on your back with knees bent. Rest your hand on your low tummy. Breathe in, as you breathe out gently draw the low tummy muscles away from your hand towards your spine without moving the pelvis or low back.

Hold for up to 5 seconds, repeat 5-10 times. Gradually increase the hold time up to 10 seconds whilst breathing in & out. This exercise can also be done sitting or standing.



Pelvic tilting

Start with the same exercise as above. As you draw your tummy in, tilt the pelvis back, flattening the low back into the bed or floor then roll it back to a level position.



Repeat this 5-10 times

Pelvic floor exercises

Lying or sitting, gently squeeze the muscles around the 3 passages.

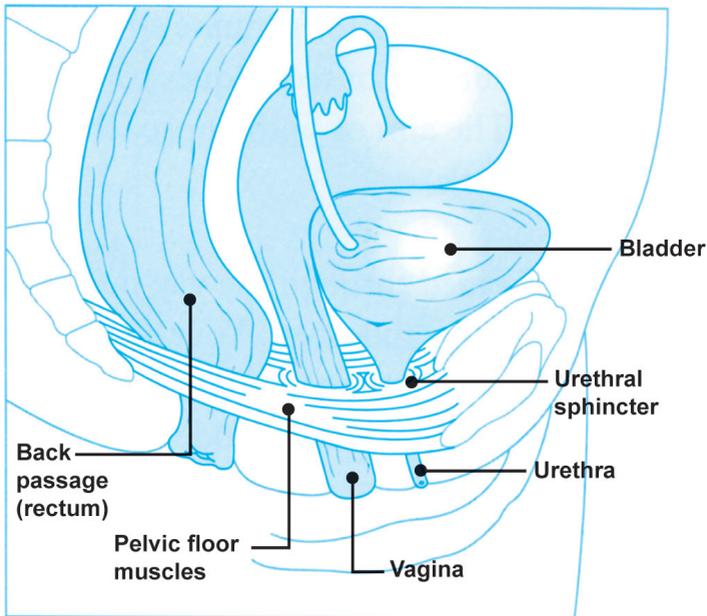
Start in the back passage and imagine you are trying to stop wind from escaping, squeeze around the vaginal passage then in the front passage as well, all 3 passages squeezing together. Hold for a count of 5 seconds, repeat 5-10 times. Gradually increase the hold time up to a count of 10 seconds.

Then see if you can do 5-10 fast squeezes.

You should progress this exercise by practising more in sitting and standing positions.

For good bladder and bowel control and strong muscles, squeeze the pelvic floor muscles when you cough, sneeze and lift, also try and avoid constipation.

If you have any bladder or bowel problems after 6 weeks please see your GP.



Repeat all of the above exercises 3 times per day. Continue with all the advice and exercise in this leaflet as advised by the physiotherapist. In some cases further physiotherapy as an outpatient may be recommended to monitor your progress.

Any questions please telephone:
Pelvic, Obstetric & Gynaecological Physiotherapy team:
01244 365176

If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on compact disk and in other languages on request.

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on:

Tel: 01244 366066 or email: cochpals@nhs.net

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若是你想索取這份傳單的中文譯本，請聯絡「病人預約中心」或向其中一名職員查詢。

Si vous voulez cette brochure en français, contactez le bureau des rendez-vous ou demandez à un membre du personnel.

यदि आप यह परचा हिन्दी में लेना चाहते हैं तो कृपया पेशेंट अँपवाइन्टमेन्ट सेन्टर से संपर्क करें या किसी स्टाफ से पूछें।

Haddii aad jeclaan laheyd buug-yarahan oo af-Soomaali ku qoran la soo xiriir xarruunta bukaan ballaminta ama wax weydii xubin shaqaalaha ka tirsan.

Si desea recibir este folleto en español, sírvase contactar al Centro de Citas para Pacientes o solicitarlo al personal.

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ اردو میں درکار ہے تو پشمنٹ اینڈ لیاؤن سٹریٹس کے کسی رکن سے رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Mae'r daflen hon ar gael (ar gais), mewn print bras, ar dâp sain neu ar ddisg, ac efallai mewn ieithoedd eraill ar gais. Cysylltwch â chanolfan apwyntiadau cleifion i ofyn am gopi.

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