Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Pregnancy Related Abdominal Diastasis

Version number: **7**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Pregnancy Related Abdominal Diastasis

Patient Information

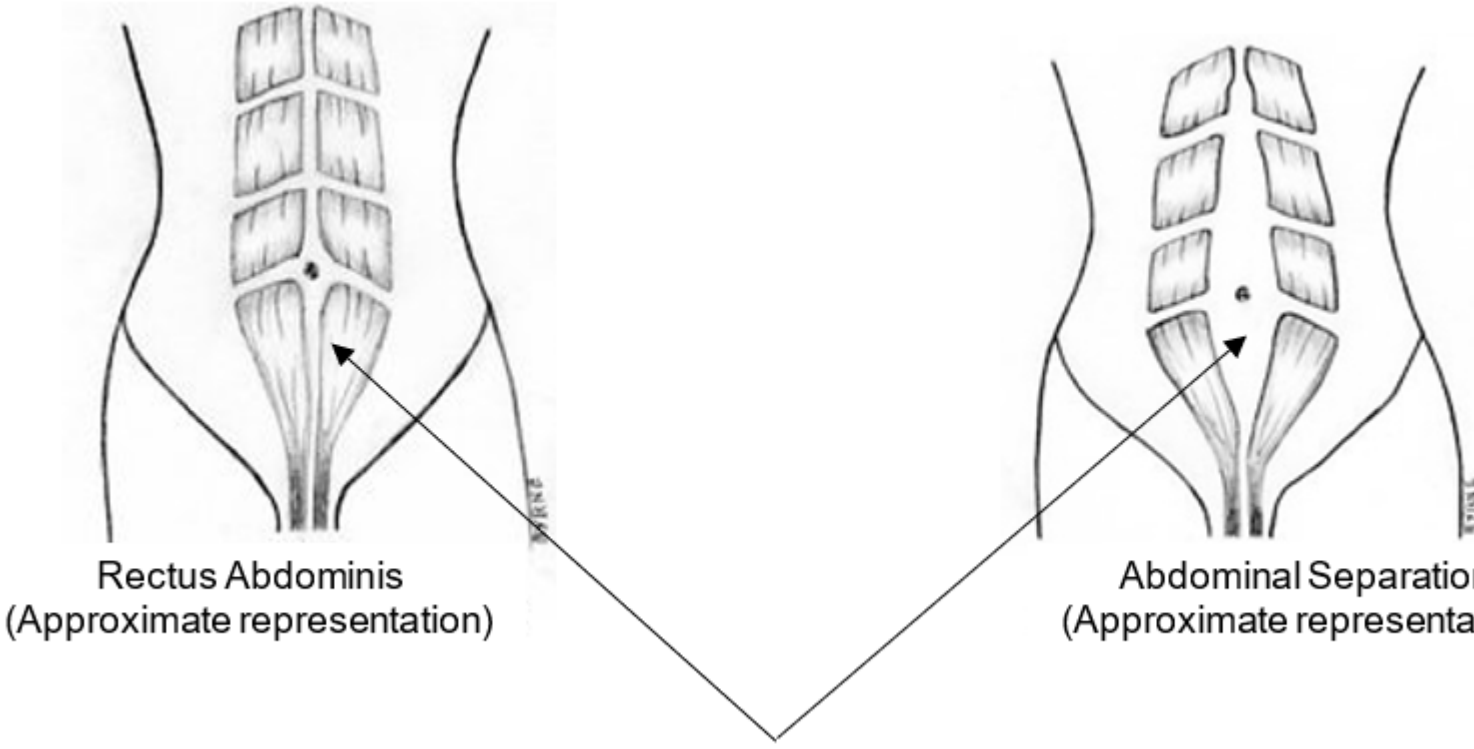
Therapy Services Department

- Author ID: KT
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Introduction

Pregnancy can cause the muscles of the abdomen to separate in the middle. This can occur due to the expanding size of the tummy and the effects of hormones that are produced during pregnancy.

It can occur at any time but more often in the last 20 weeks of pregnancy but is often more noticeable after delivery due to weakness.



Separation of the Rectus Abdominis as the abdomen expands

Abdominal separation reduces the strength of the abdominal wall and can cause low back and pelvic pain.

Factors that may increase the risk of developing abdominal diastasis are:

- Twin pregnancy/large babies
- Petite women
- Poor posture
- Separation in previous pregnancy
- Poor abdominal muscle tone
- Genetics

Treatment

Tubigrip support may be needed.

Exercises

Exercise 1

- Lying on your back, knees bent and feet flat on the floor
- Roll the pelvis backwards and flatten your lower back into the floor
- Hold for 10 seconds
- Repeat 10 times

Exercise 2

- Find the most comfortable position e.g. sitting or lying on your side
- Pull in your belly button towards the spine as though you are tightening a belt, keeping spine still
- Hold for a maximum of 10 seconds and then relax
- Repeat this up to 10 times

Try and do the exercises above one or two times a day

Pelvic Floor Exercises:

- Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time trying to stop the flow of urine
- It should feel like a lift and squeeze.

Avoid:

- Clenching your buttocks
- Pulling in your tummy
- Holding your breath

- Stopping the flow of urine in the toilet

It is important to exercise your pelvic floor in the following ways:

Slowly:

Tighten the muscles and hold tight for as many seconds as you can up to 10 seconds.

Relax for five seconds.

Do this tightening and relaxing for as many times as you can up to 10 times.

Fast:

Tighten the muscles for one second and relax for one second.

Try and do this 10 times.

These exercises need to be done three times a day, or every time you feed your baby.

Advice

1. Always maintain good posture.
2. Use a pillow behind your back when sitting.
3. Use pillows between your knees and behind your back when lying.
4. Avoid heavy lifting if possible. If you must lift e.g. baby/car seats, tighten your abdominal muscles and pelvic floor muscles as you lift. Try and maintain spinal curves e.g. bend with your knees.
5. Avoid constipation.
6. Give abdominal (tummy) support with hands when emptying bowels.
7. When getting up from lying, bend your knees and roll onto your side, drop your legs over the edge of the bed/couch and push sideways up into sitting.

Avoid

1. Side bending exercises.
2. Twisting exercises.

3. Abdominal sit ups/curl ups etc.

Contact

If you need further advice, do not hesitate to contact the MSK and Women’s Health Physiotherapist.

Monday; Tuesday and Thursday: 01942 264960.

Wednesday: 01942 482403.



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