

SEPARATION OF THE TUMMY MUSCLES IN PREGNANCY

Rectus Abdominus Diastasis, also called RAD or DRAM is a separation of the abdominal muscles which are in the middle of your abdomen.

If you notice a gaping or a bulging of your abdominals in the middle of your tummy during effort such as lifting or coughing, we recommend your abdominals to be checked before you start abdominal exercises or fitness classes. Read more about our [physio Postnatal Check MOT](#)

A Rectus Abdominus Diastasis greater than 2 fingers width and/ or when you cannot control bulging of the gap with efforts can lead to back and pelvic pain, hernias and pelvic floor dysfunction.

Due to the abdominal split you may find you are struggling to strengthen your abdominals and get back to shape.

Figure of RAD

The Diastasis recti can be the result of different factors such as pregnancy hormonal changes, the expansion of the abdominal wall as your baby grow, over straining and over loading the abdominal wall and weak pelvic floor muscles.

RAD is commonly seen on postnatal women (53% of women after birth present with a RAD and 36% of RAD noticed after birth are still wide after 5 weeks to 3 months postpartum (Boissonnault & Blaschak,1988).

66% of all patients with RAD had at least one support-related form of Pelvic Floor Dysfunction such as stress urinary incontinence, faecal incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse (T.M Spitznagle 2007).

This study shows a correlation between Rectus Abdominus Diastasis and weak pelvic Floor Muscle. This is why it is important to seek professional advice from women's health physiotherapists.

Rectus Abdominus Diastasis management

Your physiotherapist will assess your RAD and teach you specific progressive exercises targeting the deep abdominals, lumbo-pelvic stabilisers and Pelvic Floor Muscles to create a corset. This corset will create a tension and protect the back, pelvis and abdominal walls during exertion.

An abdominal wall support/Binder might be recommended as a supportive bandage, thick underwear, cycle pants or a light abdominal binder. The support makes you aware of and help you activating your abdominals. It also protects your abdominals being overstretched.

To REMEMBER: SIT-UPS - CRUNCHES are not recommended postnatally!!

To prevent straining your pelvic area during a strenuous effort, perform the "AbdoKnack" by pre-contracting your pelvic floor muscles and deep transverse abdominal.

At Physio for All, we recommend a **Physio Postnatal Check MOT** before starting strenuous fitness classes. It includes checks of your Pelvic floor, Abdominal, Rectus Abdominus Diastasis, lumbo-pelvic mobility and a postural check. Your physiotherapist will give you advice, a safe programme of exercise and discuss treatment options as necessary.

Your physio can then liaise with you fitness trainer for safe exercise and best results.