

## **PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS**

### **Abdominal Muscle Separation or Diastasis**

#### **What is an Abdominal Muscle Separation?**

An Abdominal Muscle Separation is the separation of the long muscles of the abdomen. It is also known as "Diastasis".

#### **What causes this separation?**

A number of different things during pregnancy can cause a separation of these muscles. These include:

- hormonal changes
- weight gain
- abdominal muscle weakness and stretching of the muscles as your baby grows.

#### **What it might mean to you**

A separation is normal during pregnancy to avoid the muscles tearing as your baby grows. It only becomes a problem if the muscles stay separated after your baby is born. Stretched and separated muscles do not give full support for your back and may increase the chance of back pain and back injury.

#### **What can be done to help?**

- Exercise to make the deep abdominal muscles stronger
- Wear a support belt, such as Tubigrip™, or firm compressive underwear
- Don't do sit-ups or crunches until the separation resolves
- Roll when getting into or out of bed
- Do not lifting anything heavier than your baby or do anything that causes your tummy to bulge with strain.

## Deep abdominal muscle strengthening exercises

1. Start your exercises in one of the following positions:
  - lying on your side
  - lying on your back
  - sitting
  - standing, or
  - 4 point kneeling
2. Pull your lower tummy in towards your back
3. Hold for 5-10 seconds while breathing normally
4. Rest and repeat 8-12 times
5. Repeat these exercises 4 times each day
6. To make your exercises harder, over the next 6 weeks, do them in a sitting or standing position and increase your effort as you are able.



You can check the recovery of your muscle separation by:

1. Lying on your back with your knees bent.
2. Put your fingertips across your belly at the level of your belly button.
3. Lift your head and shoulders away from the floor (a curl) and feel for the sides of your tummy muscles coming together.
4. If you can feel a gap wider than one finger, then you may still have separation.

### Physiotherapy Follow-up

Some patients may need a postnatal tummy muscle check 6 weeks after giving birth.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are unable to come on this date, please call the Physiotherapy Department to rearrange.

**For more information contact:**

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