



MELBOURNE

**Pregnancy &
Pelvic Physio**

Abdominal Separation



What is Abdominal Muscle Separation?

An abdominal muscle separation refers to the stretching of the long muscles of the front of abdomen away from the midline which occurs during pregnancy.

What causes this separation?

- Pressure from the baby growing inside the abdomen combined with
- Hormonal changes making the connective tissue more mobile.

What is normal?

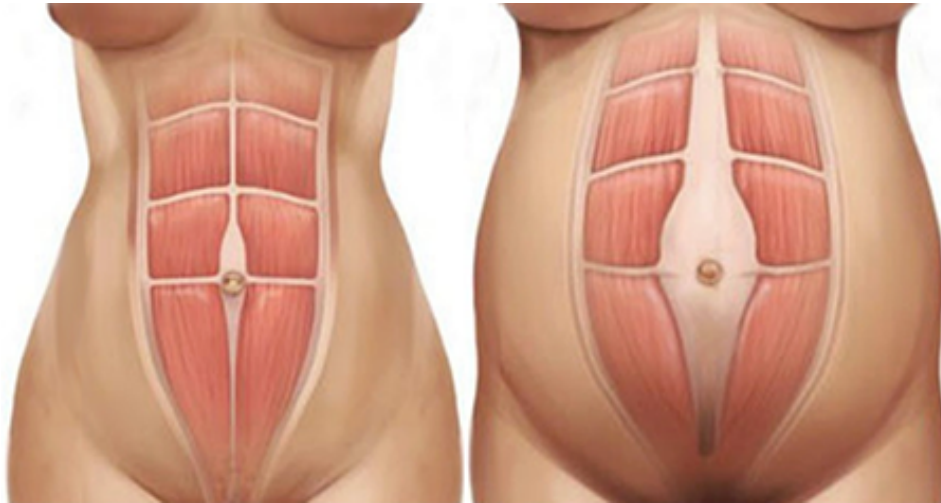
- Recent studies have shown that 100% of women will have some degree of abdominal separation at 35 weeks gestation
- Therefore separation of the abdominals can be considered a normal adaptation consistent with the anatomical changes of pregnancy
- The separation should naturally decrease over the first 6-12 weeks after delivery and may continue to reduce for 6-12 months after the birth.
- Some women may experience a deep or visible separation, weakness of the abdominal wall or obvious 'doming' which may need further assessment and intervention to completely resolve.
- Evidence shows that abdominal separation does not cause back pain or trouble controlling your bladder or bowel.

What can be done to help?

- Exercise to improve control of the abdominal wall.
- Avoid sit-ups or abdominal crunches during pregnancy.
- Get into or out of bed via your side.
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby or anything that causes your tummy to bulge or strain.
- Avoid straining on the toilet
- Wearing an abdominal support such as Tubigrip™, or support shorts such as Solidea Pregnancy and Recovery garments (available in the clinic).



Abdominal Separation Cont



1.

Image 1

L: Representation of rectus abdominis muscle

R: Representation of rectus abdominis position during pregnancy

Post Partum Exercise program (example: please consult your physio)

1. MINI ABDOMINAL CRUNCH



Lie on your back, propped up with a wedge or cushions, with your arms by your side.
Tighten your pelvic floor and lower stomach muscles.
Lengthen your arms by your side and slowly lift your head, shoulders and upper back off the wedge.
Look at your stomach as you raise up.
If your stomach muscles bulge out or dome then stop this exercise.
Slowly lower yourself back down.

2. ALTERNATE LEGS TO TABLETOP N CROOK LIE



Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
Maintain a hips distance between both knees and feet.
Exhale and tighten your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles.
Simultaneously slowly raise one leg, keeping your knee at 90 degrees.
Inhale holding this position, then exhale and lower your leg back down to the floor.
Repeat this movement on the other side, ensuring you do not twist or arch your trunk.

3. SUPERMANN



Start on your hands and knees, with your hands under your shoulders, and your knees under your hips.
Make sure your back is flat.
Gently tighten your pelvic floor and stomach muscles.
Slowly slide one arm out in front of you while at the same time stretching your opposite leg out behind you, lifting them up off the floor.
Hold this position, ensuring your keep you do not rotate your back and hips.
Slide your arm and leg back in to the starting position and then repeat with the other pair.

Exercises courtesy of Physitrack