

■ Evelyn & Rose Women's Health

Abdominal Muscle Separation (Diastasis Recti) in Pregnancy

■ What Is It?

Abdominal muscle separation — known as **diastasis recti** — occurs when the left and right sides of the rectus abdominis (the “six-pack” muscles) stretch and separate along the midline (linea alba). This is a common and normal change during pregnancy due to hormonal effects and the growing uterus.

■ Why It Happens

- The hormone **relaxin** softens connective tissues.
- The **expanding uterus** stretches abdominal muscles.
- Increased **intra-abdominal pressure** adds strain on the midline.

Almost **2 in 3 pregnant women** experience some degree of separation by the third trimester.

■ Signs & Symptoms

- A visible or palpable gap down the middle of your abdomen (especially when sitting up).
- A bulge or ridge when you lift your head or shoulders off the bed.
- Core weakness, back pain, or poor posture.
- Coning or doming of the abdominal wall during activity.

■ Diagnosis

Your **obstetrician or physiotherapist** can assess separation by measuring the width and depth of the gap (usually in finger widths). An ultrasound can also confirm the extent if needed.

■ Management & Recovery

Most cases improve naturally postpartum, especially with guided rehabilitation.

Do:

- Practice pelvic floor and gentle core exercises as advised by a women's health physiotherapist.
- Roll to your side before sitting up from lying down.
- Maintain good posture and body mechanics.

Avoid:

- Sit-ups, crunches, or heavy lifting in late pregnancy and early postpartum.
- Movements that cause abdominal bulging or doming.

■■ When to Seek Help

If you notice:

- Persistent abdominal bulging after 6–12 weeks postpartum
- Back or pelvic pain
- Difficulty engaging your core

Book an appointment with your **women's health physiotherapist or obstetrician** for assessment and a personalised exercise plan.

■ Key Takeaway

Diastasis recti is **common, treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of**. With proper support, your core strength and abdominal function can be safely restored.

■ Evelyn & Rose Women's Health

■■■■ Comprehensive care for pregnancy, birth, and beyond.

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