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 a ‘Diastasis’.

What causes this separation?

A combination of factors during pregnancy can cause a separation of the abdominal muscles to occur. 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 a normal safety mechanism to avoid the muscles tearing as your baby grows. It only becomes a problem if the muscles stay separated postnatally. Stretched and separated muscles do not provide full support for your back and may increase the incidence of back pain and back injury.

What can be done to help?

- Exercises to strengthen the deep abdominal muscles.
- Wearing an abdominal support belt, such as Tubigrip™, or firm compressive underwear.
- Avoiding sit-ups or abdominal crunches until the separation resolves.
- Rolling when getting into or out of bed.
- Minimising lifting anything heavier than your baby or anything that causes your tummy to bulge with strain.

Deep abdominal muscle strengthening exercises

1. Begin your exercise in one of the following positions; side lying, lying on your back, sitting, standing or 4 point kneeling.
2. Draw your lower tummy in towards your spine.
3. Hold for 5–10 seconds while breathing normally.
4. Rest and repeat 8–12 times.
5. Repeat this set of 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 monitor the recovery of your Abdominal Muscle Separation by:

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

Physiotherapy follow-up
Some patients may require a postnatal abdominal muscle check 6 weeks after giving birth.

Date: ________________________________
Time: ________________________________

If you are unable to attend on this date please call the Physiotherapy Department to reschedule.

For more information
Physiotherapy Department
Level 1, Royal Women’s Hospital
Cnr Grattan St and Flemington Rd
Parkville Vic 3052
T 03 8345 3160