

## PROGRESSION OF EXERCISE

If your stomach bulges out excessively with the three exercises below, then you have started them too soon. Stop doing them and go back to the Deep Tummy Exercises and the Pelvic Tilt and try again in a week or two.

### The head and shoulder lift

- Lie on your back with your knees bent up
- Perform the pelvic tilt
- Raise your head and shoulders, hold for a few seconds, then release and repeat
- Try to increase the number of times you do this.



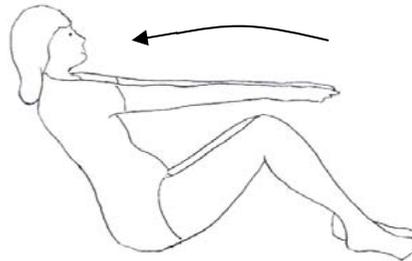
### Diagonals

- Lie on your back with your knees bent up
- Perform the pelvic tilt
- Now reach with one hand to the opposite knee, lifting your shoulder up. Do this to alternate sides.



### Curl downs

- Sit on the bed or floor with your knees bent up and arms in front of you.
- Lean backwards a little, controlling the movement with your tummy muscles.
- Slowly come up to sitting.



### ADDITIONAL EXERCISE

- Sitting on a chair, put a hand on the top of the opposite knee.
- Raise your knee about 10 cm and resist this movement with your hand.

Continue with these exercises until the separation has reduced to one finger's width.

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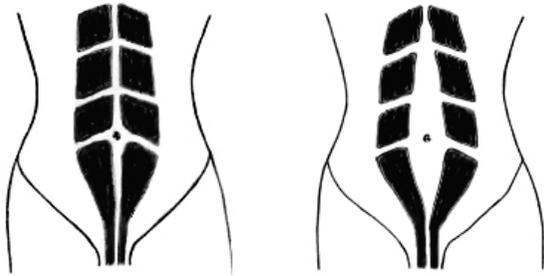
## SEPARATION OF THE ABDOMINAL MUSCLES

Also known as:  
*Diastasis Rectus Abdominis*  
*Divarication Recti*

**Physiotherapy  
Department**

For some women, pregnancy can cause abdominal separation, a condition where the left and right side of the rectus abdominis muscle spreads apart at the body's midline. This is often first noticed post natally and indicates that the abdominal muscles are weak.

The abdominal muscles are important in supporting your abdomen and back. If they remain weak, you are more likely to suffer from back pain.



Abdominal muscles

Abdominal separation

A small amount of separation, one to two fingers width, is common after most pregnancies and is not a problem. But if the gap at your midline is:

- More than 2 fingers width
- Does not shrink as you work your abdominals harder
- A visible small bulge protruding at your midline.

then you probably have abdominal separation and need to take a few special precautions during exercise and other activities.

## EXERCISES

It is important to strengthen the inner corset muscles or deep tummy muscles first.

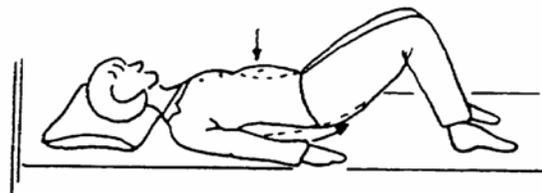
### The Deep Tummy Exercise

You can practice this in any comfortable position. Keep your back still while you do this exercise.

- Let your tummy sag
- Breathe in
- As you breathe out, gently pull your belly button in
- Breathe normally as you hold your tummy in for as long as possible

### The Pelvic Tilt

- Lie on your back with your knees bent up
- Perform the deep tummy exercise
- Push the small of your back down so that it flattens onto the bed
- Hold this position for a few seconds then release and repeat



You may need to do these two exercises for 1-3 months before you can progress to the exercises overleaf.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Always get out of bed by bending your knees, rolling onto your side and pushing up with your hands. Do the reverse to get into bed. Avoid a 'sit up' action.



2. Stand tall and walk with your tummy and bottom drawn in as often as possible.
3. Avoid activities that involve twisting or bending of the trunk. Try to keep your knees and body pointing in the same direction.
4. When you cough or sneeze pull in the abdominal muscles and support your tummy with your hands.
5. Avoid heavy lifting. If you have to lift, eg your baby, draw in and hold your tummy muscles while you lift. ie Draw your tummy button towards your spine.
6. Avoid exercises that cause your abdominal wall to bulge out on exertion.