

**BLOOM PHYSICAL THERAPY AND
WELLNESS'S GUIDE TO**

DIASTASIS RECTI

AKA THE "AB GAP"

Learn about diastasis recti, what causes it, how to perform a self-assessment, how to help with recovery and healing, and 4 exercises to help you connect with your deep core to start the recovery process.

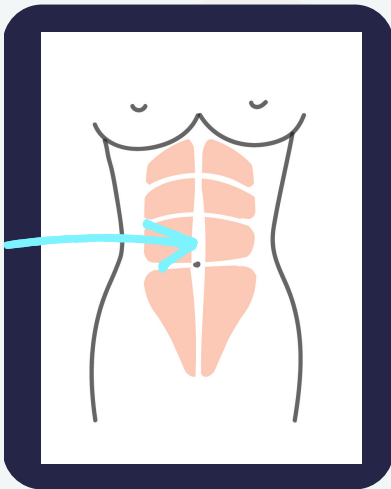
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WHAT IS DIASTASIS RECTI?

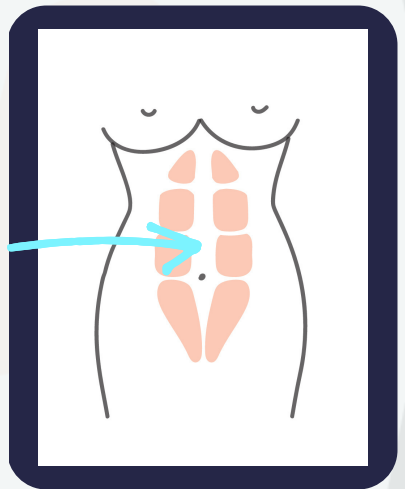


A THINNING & WIDENING OF THE LINEA ALBA

The linea alba is the connective tissue that runs vertically down the midline of your rectus abdominis (6 pack muscles).



Abdomen **WITHOUT**
diastasis

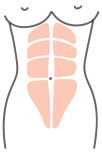


Abdomen **WITH**
diastasis

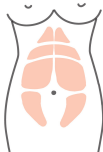
WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF DIASTASIS RECTI?



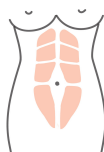
Types of Diastasis Recti



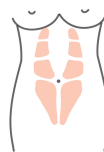
*Normal
rectus
abdominis*



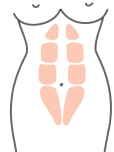
Below navel



Around navel



Above navel



Open diastasis

Diastasis Recti can occur below, around, or above the navel, or any combination of these.

WHAT DOES DIASTASIS RECTI LOOK LIKE?



There are variations in diastasis appearance based on location, severity, etc. It often appears as a separation in the rectus muscles (6 pack), or as a pooch in the lower abdomen.



WHAT CAUSES DIASTASIS RECTI?

- It is a physiological process that occurs during pregnancy to make space as baby grows.
 - **100%** of women have it as they approach their last few weeks of pregnancy!!



- With or without being pregnant, it can develop with consistent:
 - Poor abdominal pressure management (pressure out on the 6-pack muscles)
 - Poor core activation patterns
 - Suboptimal posture
 - Chronic constipation/straining
 - Poor core exercise progressions postpartum

HOW DO YOU ASSESS DIASTASIS RECTI?



DIASTASIS RECTI

Self Assessment



Click on the video or link for a tutorial on how to check yourself for diastasis recti.

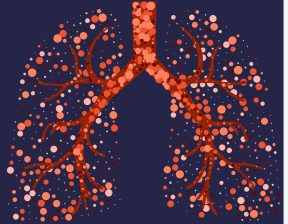
HOW DOES DIASTASIS RECTI HEAL?



Brain-Body Connection



Posture & Movement Patterns



Breathing & Pressure Management



Correct Dosage of Exercise



Recognize Doming



Soft Tissue Work

Note that genetics & tissue quality also play a role in healing time.

Size of a diastasis is not indicative of ability to heal. Some people with a very large diastasis heal very well, while others with a small one do not. Surgery is rarely required, and even if it is, physical therapy is recommended prior to and after to improve outcomes.

HOW DO THESE HELP?



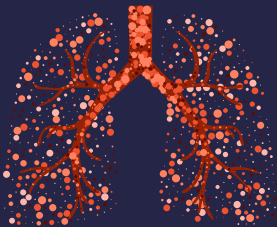
Brain-Body Connection

- Be able to engage your core muscles & coordinate *WHEN* they engage with movement. Engaging your deep core before your movement muscles provides stability and decreases pressure out on a diastasis.
 - Deep core: transverse abdominis, diaphragm, pelvic floor and multifidus)
 - Internal & External Obliques
 - Rectus abdominis (6-pack muscles)



Posture & Movement Patterns

- Posture during pregnancy & postpartum can be tricky! We tend to fall into our own unique posture during these times.
- Learning & adopting optimal posture while standing, sitting, baby carrying/feeding and exercise can decrease pressure out on a diastasis, reduce back, hip and pelvic pain and promote healing.



Breathing & Pressure Management

- Coordinate breathing with pelvic floor & core muscle engagement & relaxation.
 - Using an optimal breathing pattern during exertion is so important for managing pressure so pressure doesn't go out on a diastasis or down to the pelvic floor.



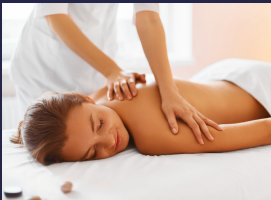
Correct Dosage of Exercise

- Correct dosage of exercise is important for the connective tissue of the linea alba to heal. It's a balance!
 - Too much overload & pressure out during exercise can cause stress to the linea alba and make a diastasis worse.
 - Not enough stimulus and loading to the linea alba can result in no progress in healing.
- Finding the balance between not enough and too much load helps a diastasis heal, and this constantly changes as you get stronger.



Recognize Doming

- Doming is when our rectus abdominis (6-pack muscles) fire before our transverse abdominis (TA's) and you notice a **breadloaf** appearance in your stomach.
- Doming puts pressure out on your linea alba, and consistent doming can worsen a diastasis.
- Our TA's acts like a corset to stabilize our pelvis and back, while putting just enough pull on our linea alba to decrease the amount of pressure out.
- If we recognize doming during exercise or daily life, we can change our coordination to decrease doming & strengthen our core.



Soft Tissue Work

- Sometimes the fascia and tissue on our sides can get bound up and not move freely, causing a pull out on our linea alba.
- Soft tissue work and skin rolling can help the fascia move more freely, allowing the fascia to close without resistance as you gain deep core strength.

WHAT EXERCISES ARE SAFE TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE A DIASTASIS?

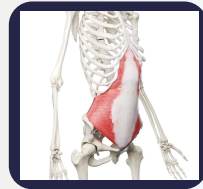


Each person is different & it continually changes...

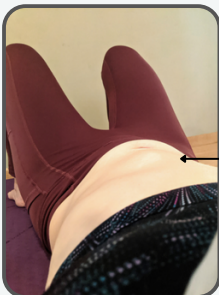
- Any exercise can be helpful as long as you are engaging your core correctly & are strong enough to do the exercise without doming and putting pressure out on your diastasis.
- Any exercise can also be harmful if you are not engaging your core correctly and if you are putting pressure out on a diastasis.
- Learning how to engage your deep core correctly, watch for doming & find the balance between enough tension and too much tension on the linea alba is key!



Balance between too much & too little tension



Ability to engage your deep core & coordinate this with exercises



✗
Doming



✓
Deep Core
Activation

4 EXERCISES TO CONNECT WITH YOUR CORE

Click on photo to view YouTube video & exercise description

*the first video takes some coordination & practice, but is worth the effort to learn how to coordinate your muscle engagement patterns.



360 deep breathing
with core engagement
to "find" your TA's



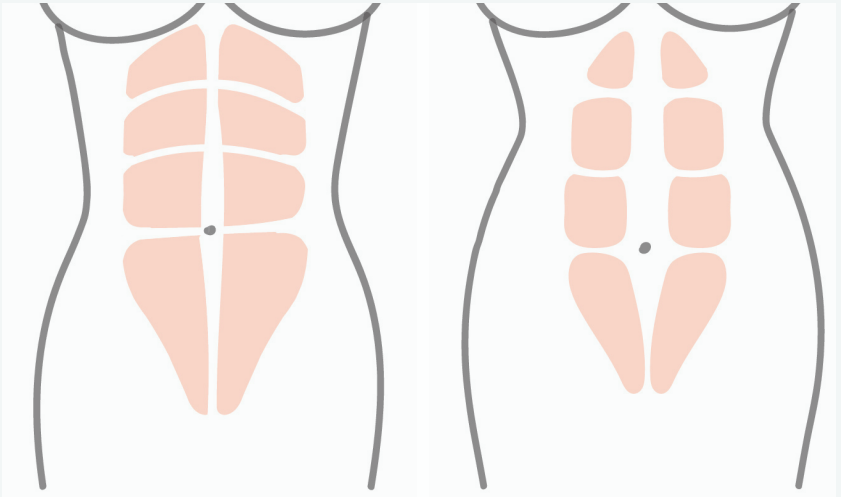
Quadruped TA's with
Adduction



Hooklying Marches
with Feet on a Chair



Opposite Hand Knee
Press



Thank you for reading my guide to Diastasis Recti! I hope you found it helpful and learned a few new things. If you have questions or would like guidance, feel free to reach out at Jess@bloomptwellness.com



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