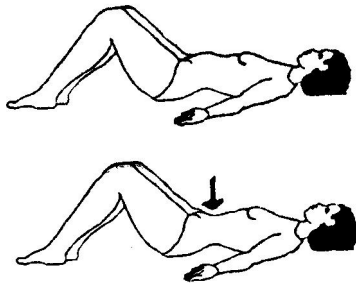


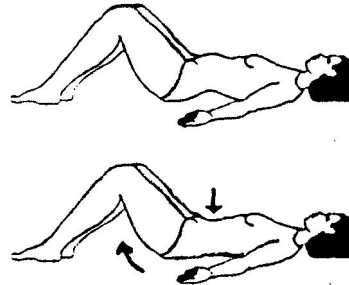
## Practice these exercises several times each day:

- ▶ Flatten or “hollow” your abdomen as you breathe out. Relax. Do this 3-5 times, 3 sessions per day. Try this exercise in sitting, standing, lying on your side and lying on your back with your knees bent.



- ▶ Now tighten your abdomen as above but this time continue to breathe while keeping the stomach muscles firm for 2-3 breaths. Relax.

- ▶ Pelvic floor muscle exercises (Kegels); pull up and tighten inside as if to stop yourself from passing urine or gas.
- ▶ Pelvic tilt exercise, ensuring no abdominal bulging occurs



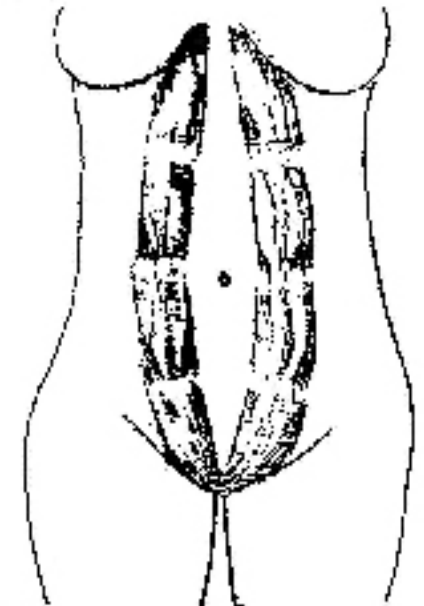
**Avoid fatigue, breathe holding and bulging at all times.**

**For more information please contact:**

BC Women's Hospital  
Physiotherapy Department

\* Phone: 604-875-2126 \*

# Diastasis Recti Abdominus (Abdominal Muscle Gap)



© 2009  
BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre  
Reviewed 2009 with no changes

BCW419

Physiotherapy  
Department  
4500 Oak Street  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6H 3N1

## What is Diastasis Recti Abdominus (DRA)?

The rectus abdominus is a muscle that runs from your breast bone to your pubic bone. It is made up of two long bands of muscle (recti) that are joined in the middle by connective tissue.

During pregnancy, as the baby grows and needs more space, the central tissue softens and becomes stretched. This causes a gap between the muscle bands. More widening can occur during labour and delivery.

After delivery the rectus abdominus usually returns to normal. Some wide gaps may take longer to heal and new mothers should take extra care when using these muscles.

## Do I have it?

### To check yourself:

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat

- ▶ place your fingers just above your belly button
- ▶ lift your head and shoulders off the bed and feel the cord-like edges of the muscles on either side
- ▶ If the distance between the cords is more than two finger-widths, you will need to do special exercises to help reduce the gap
- ▶ you will need to learn ways to decrease strain on your stomach muscles
- ▶ Sometimes you may see a bulge in the middle between the muscles when checking yourself or when you get up from bed, rise from sitting or when lifting your baby. This bulging means there is a gap, even if the gap on testing is less than two finger-widths.

**\* consult the physiotherapist if you are not sure**

## How do I correct it?

If you find a gap or bulging between your muscles, you should avoid straining your abdominal muscles:

- ▶ avoid holding your breath and pushing your abdomen out when lifting (in other words, continue to breathe)
- ▶ avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby
- ▶ avoid sit-ups or abdominal crunches
- ▶ avoid exercises that involve bending, side-bending or twisting

### Instead you should:

- ▶ draw in your abdomen and roll onto your side like a log, before getting out of bed
- ▶ draw in your abdomen and bend your hips and knees when picking up anything from the floor
- ▶ draw in your abdomen each time you lift your baby
- ▶ continue to breathe normally when doing any of the above