

## Physiotherapy Outpatient Department Patient Information

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# Information

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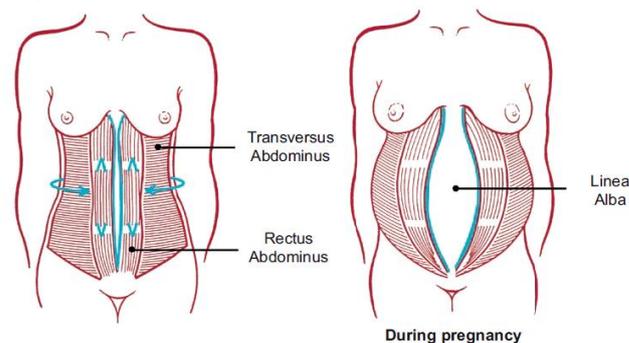
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## Care of stomach muscles after separation during Pregnancy

Your abdominal (tummy) muscles support your back during pregnancy. Sometimes during pregnancy these muscles 'gape' open to allow room for the baby as it grows. This is more likely to happen if you have had a large baby, a twin pregnancy, excess fluid around the baby or you have had several pregnancies.

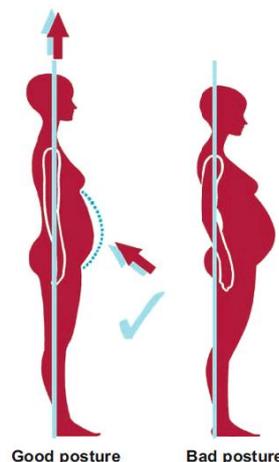
In most cases, the gap closes a few days after birth. However sometimes it may persist, causing tummy or back pain, and an unsightly tummy.



This leaflet reminds you how to look after yourself and get your muscles back into shape after childbirth.

### Posture

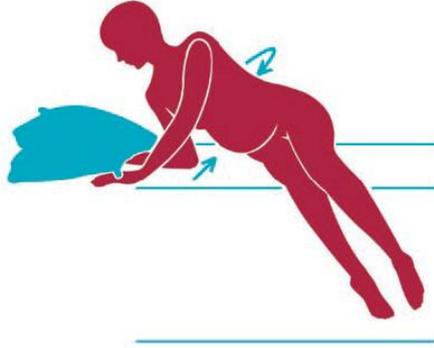
It is important to stand and walk 'tall' with the top of your head stretching up towards the ceiling. Notice how your pelvis then tilts so that your bottom goes 'down and under' and your tummy goes 'up and in'.



## Care with moving

### Getting out of bed

Never 'heave' straight up from lying to sitting as it overstretches your tummy and back. Instead, bend your knees, roll onto your side and push up with your elbow and hand. Reverse the process to get into bed.



### Getting out of the bath

Put a non slip mat in the bath. Once the water has drained away, roll onto your side and push up onto your knees. Use a handrail if available.

### Coughing, laughing or sneezing

Coughing, laughing or sneezing increases the pressure within the abdomen. Supporting the tummy by cuddling it with your hands will prevent it from 'bulging' and the gap getting worse.

### Rest

It is important to take the strain off your abdominal muscles at intervals during the day (for example by sitting down when having a drink). Have an extra rest lying on your bed sometime during the day.

### Lifting

**Avoid heavy lifting.** Where you have to lift, do so correctly: Remember to bend your knees and keep your back straight, hold the object close to your body, and move your feet rather than twisting your back.



## Exercises

It is important to gently exercise your low abdominal muscles to aid quicker recovery after having your baby and to encourage the muscles to 'close'.

It is best to start by exercising the 'deep core' tummy exercises before progressing to more strenuous exercises such as sit ups.

Exercise one:

- Sit reclined and supported by pillows on a bed or settee and take a relaxed breath in
- As you breathe out, gently tighten your low abdominal muscles
- Repeat a few times, and practise several times a day

Exercise two:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor or bed
- Take a breath in
- As you breathe out draw your abdominal muscles in, this will start to tilt your pelvis
- At the same time put the tips of your fingers either side of the gap of your tummy muscles and push them together to help to close the gap.

Repeat the above exercises 5 times in each session and do several sessions a day.

These exercises should be pain free!

## Physiotherapy

Your physiotherapist will check the size of the gap at regular intervals and progress your exercises as necessary. They may also give you a double thickness tubi-grip to wear which will help to support your tummy muscles and protect your back.

**Don't forget to do your pelvic floor exercises!**

## Further Information

Physiotherapy Outpatient Department telephone number: 01305 255314