

**MummyFIT**<sup>®</sup>

## **Diastasis Recti Guide**

**How to Check for Abdominal separation  
(Diastasis Recti)**

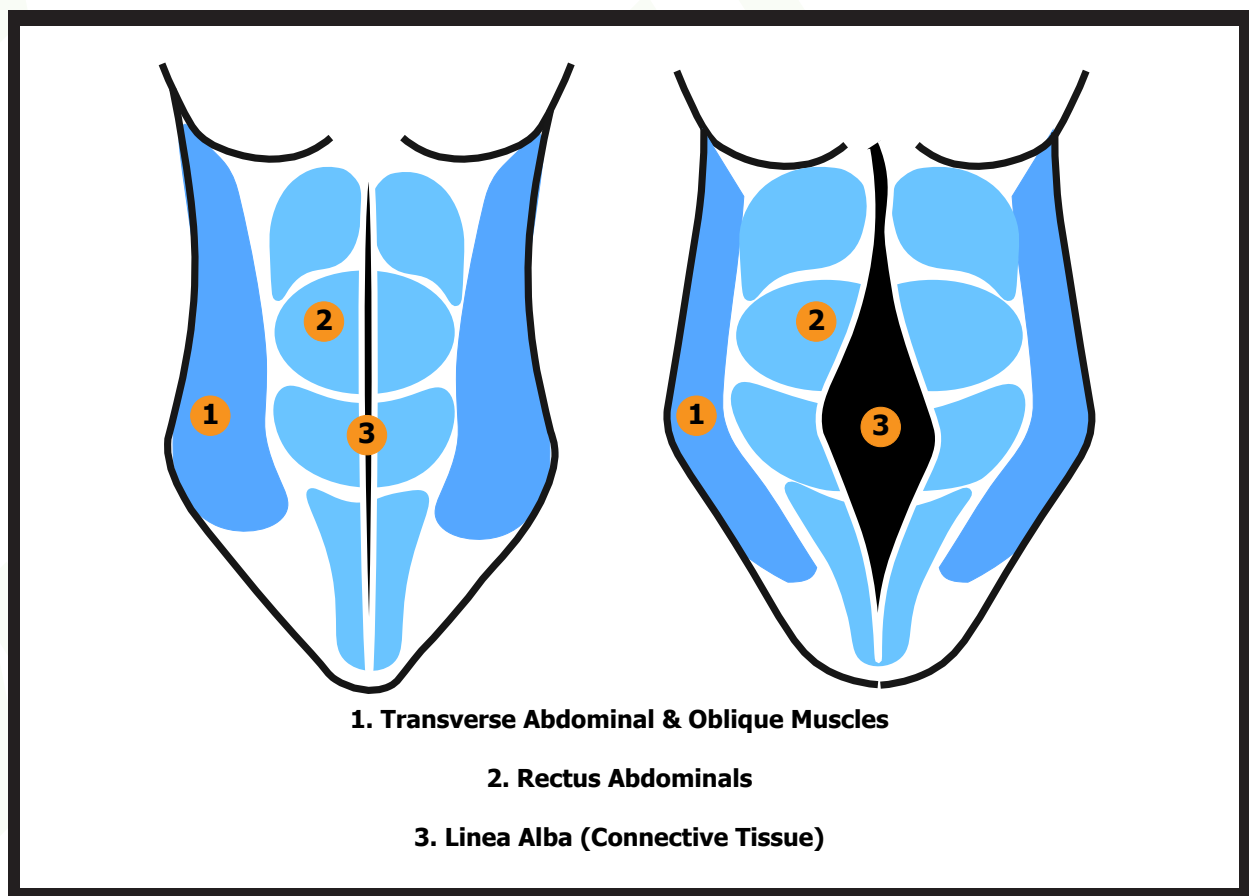
**To be read in conjunction with the  
“MummyFIT Ab Check Video” available by  
subscription to MummyFIT at Home.**



**MummyFIT**<sup>®</sup>

# What is Abdominal Separation, Diastasis Recti (DR)?

Abdominal separation (diastasis recti/DR) is the separation of the six pack muscles (rectus abdominal muscles) along the midline of the tummy (abdomen). During pregnancy, due to the growing baby and hormonal changes, the connective tissue (linea alba) of the six pack can become stretched and weakened. A ridge, dip or gap can develop in this connective tissue anywhere between the lower breast bone/sternum (the xiphoid process) and the pubis. This can result in abdominal and pelvic floor weakness and impaired core muscles.



## Is it common?

Yes! It is extremely common in pregnancy. Research suggests that between 90-100% of pregnant and post natal mummies will experience some form of DR.

## Will it get worse?

As long as you exercise safely (with guidance from a qualified level 3 pre and post natal instructor or other specialist) your DR should not worsen. However, if your exercise places too much load on the body and core during pregnancy or after your baby is born, you can make your DR worse.

The key is to invest in expert advice and exercise safely, progressively and effectively following our *MummyFIT* stages of pre and post natal exercise.

## How do I check for DR? (3 key steps)

To fully check for DR you will firstly need to lie on the floor in the supine position (on your back) with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.

When you are comfortable, lift your shirt up so that you can see your tummy and roll down any joggers/shorts which are higher than the top of your hip (iliac crest).

YOU NEED TO USE YOUR FINGERS TO ASSESS THE LENGTH, WIDTH, DEPTH AND MUSCLE TONE/TENSION ALONG THE CENTRE LINE OF YOUR TUMMY. YOU SHOULD DO THIS BY PALPATING (PRESSING DOWN) AS YOU MOVE YOUR FINGERS UP AND DOWN THE CENTRE LINE (LINEA ALBA).



There are three key stages to check:

### **Step 1: Core relaxed (at rest)**

Starting at your belly button firmly walk your fingers (palpate) along the mid line of your tummy towards your chest bone (sternum). Work back towards your belly button then down to your pubis, again following the same mid line.

**Repeat a couple of times and use your fingers to note any ridges, gaps or any areas which feel slightly less springy than others.**

## Step 2: Core relaxed + “shoulder lift”

Breathing as normal, place one of your hands behind your head and raise your head, neck and shoulders slightly off the floor and tuck your chin into your chest in a movement similar to a shoulder or head lift.

**\*\*Important – this should not be a full crunch!! \*\***

Whilst you remain in your head lift, palpate your tummy from your belly button to your sternum and back down to your pubis with the fingers of your other hand as described in Step 1.

## Step 3: Core engaged + “shoulder lift”

Whilst laying flat on the floor, take a nice deep breath in and slowly draw your belly button into your spine. Exhale gently and with one of your hands behind your head raise your head, neck and shoulders slightly off the floor and tuck your chin into your chest in a movement similar to a shoulder or a head lift.

**\*\*Important – this should not be a full crunch!! \*\***

Whilst you remain in your shoulder lift, palpate your tummy from your belly button to your sternum and back down to your pubis with your other hand as described in Step 1.

**KEY TIP:** Muscle Tone and Tension! If the connective tissue feels firm, the tone is likely to be strong. If, as you press down, the tissue feels softer, there is likely to be some weakness.

## **If I don't feel any gaps what am I looking/feeling for?**

Although you may not see or feel any gaps along your linea alba it is highly probable that the core muscles will have weakened during pregnancy. You may also feel that you do not have the same tension in your tummy muscles as you had before baby which can also be a good indication of weakness. As you palpate on the mid line of the tummy you are looking for strong connective tissue along the centre line.

We recommend spending time connecting, engaging and strengthening your core muscles during pregnancy and as early as possible after childbirth.

## **What exercises should I avoid if I have DR?**

If you find any DR you should always monitor it closely. Here is a list of some of the key exercises to avoid (but you should also avoid any exercise which is causing heavy load or strain on the abdominal muscles):-

- Crunches
- Press ups on toes
- Abdominal twisting movements
- Full planks on toes
- Heavy lifting
- Lifting heavy weights above head height
- Any other exercises which increase abdominal pressure

## How often should I recheck my abs?

Here at *MummyFIT* we recommend that you check every 2-4 weeks following Steps 1-3 above. Remember to measure and record the width, length, depth and tone (soft/firm) of the muscle and connective tissue.

## What exercises can I do to help my DR?

A full list of exercises is available on our *MummyFIT* website under Resources and the “AT HOME” section.



MummyFIT Ltd  
[www.mummyfituk.co.uk](http://www.mummyfituk.co.uk)  
[info@mummyfituk.co.uk](mailto:info@mummyfituk.co.uk)