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# HEAL YOUR CORE

A Guide to Diastasis Recti Recovery for women after childbirth



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## INTRODUCTION

Postpartum changes are the physical and emotional adjustments that occur in a woman's body after giving birth. These changes can vary from person to person, but some common ones include:

### Physical Changes:

- **Uterine Contractions:** The uterus contracts back to its pre-pregnancy size, causing cramping known as afterpains.
- **Vaginal Discharge:** Lochia, a bloody discharge, is common after childbirth as the body sheds the uterine lining.
- **Breast Changes:** Breasts might become engorged, tender, and produce milk for breastfeeding.
- **Weight Loss:** Some weight loss occurs immediately after birth due to the baby, placenta, and amniotic fluid being expelled, but the body takes time to return to pre-pregnancy weight.
- **Hormonal Fluctuations:** Hormone levels fluctuate, which can affect mood, energy levels, and physical well-being.
- **Abdominal Changes:** The abdominal muscles may take time to regain strength and tone after stretching during pregnancy.

### Emotional Changes:

- **Baby Blues:** Feelings of sadness, mood swings, and anxiety are common in the first few weeks postpartum.
- **Postpartum Depression (PPD):** Some women experience more severe and prolonged feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and lack of interest in activities, which might require professional help.
- **Anxiety:** New responsibilities, changes in routine, and hormonal shifts can lead to increased anxiety.
- **Adjustment Challenges:** Adapting to the demands of a newborn and changes in relationships can be emotionally challenging.

### Other Changes:

- **Sleep Deprivation:** Irregular sleep patterns due to the baby's needs can lead to exhaustion.
- **Changes in Relationships:** Adjusting to new roles as parents can affect relationships with partners, family, and friends.

It's essential for new mothers to seek support and care during this period. Open communication with healthcare providers, seeking help from friends and family, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and joining support groups can assist in managing postpartum changes effectively. If feelings of sadness or anxiety persist or intensify, seeking professional help is crucial for mental health and well-being.

## THE CORE AFTER CHILDBIRTH

The **core muscles** play a significant role during and after childbirth. Throughout pregnancy, these muscles stretch and undergo significant changes to accommodate the growing baby. After childbirth, these muscles need time to recover and regain their strength.

Postpartum, it's common for women to experience weakened abdominal muscles, especially the rectus abdominis (the "six-pack" muscles) and the deeper transverse abdominis, which acts like a natural corset supporting the spine and organs. This weakening can contribute to issues like diastasis recti (separation of the abdominal muscles), lower back pain, and pelvic floor issues.

To help strengthen the core muscles after childbirth, **exercises focusing on the pelvic floor and deep abdominal muscles are recommended. However, it's crucial to consult with a healthcare provider or a postpartum physical therapist before starting any exercise regimen.**

You can enrol on a good postpartum recovery program here [SNAP BACK BUNDLE](#) .

Some exercises that may be recommended include pelvic tilts, Kegels, gentle abdominal contractions, and gradually progressing to more advanced core exercises as the muscles regain strength.

Rehabilitating the core after childbirth is a gradual process, and it's essential to listen to your body and progress at a pace that feels comfortable. Additionally, certain activities like yoga or Pilates tailored for postpartum recovery can also be beneficial in rebuilding core strength while ensuring safety and proper alignment.

## THE CORE MUSCLES

The core muscles are a group of muscles that play a fundamental role in stabilising, supporting, and facilitating movement within the body. They're not just limited to the abs; they include several muscles in the abdomen, lower back, pelvis, and hips. Here are some of the key core muscles:

**Rectus Abdominus:** Known as the "six-pack" muscles, these run vertically along the front of the abdomen and help flex the spine.

**Obliques:** There are internal and external obliques on each side of the abdomen. They help with rotation and lateral flexion of the spine.

**Transverse Abdominus:** This muscle wraps around the abdomen horizontally and acts like a corset, providing stability and supporting the internal organs.

**Erector Spinae:** These muscles run along the spine and help maintain posture and extension of the back.

**Multifidus:** Also situated along the spine, these muscles aid in stabilising the vertebrae during movement.

**Pelvic Floor Muscles:** Found at the base of the pelvis, these muscles provide support for the organs in the pelvis and assist in urinary and faecal control.

**Hip Muscles:** Muscles like the iliopsoas, gluteal muscles, and hip adductors also contribute to core stability and movement.

Having strong core muscles is vital for various activities, including maintaining proper posture, preventing injury, and enhancing athletic performance.



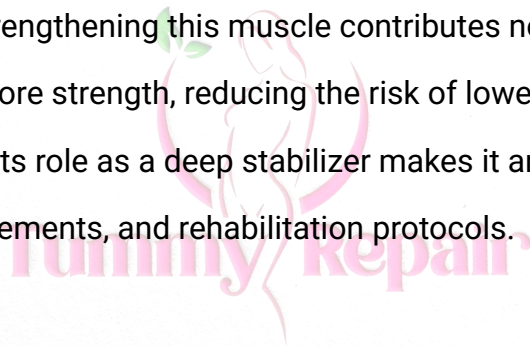
## THE TRANSVERSE ABDOMINUS MUSCLES

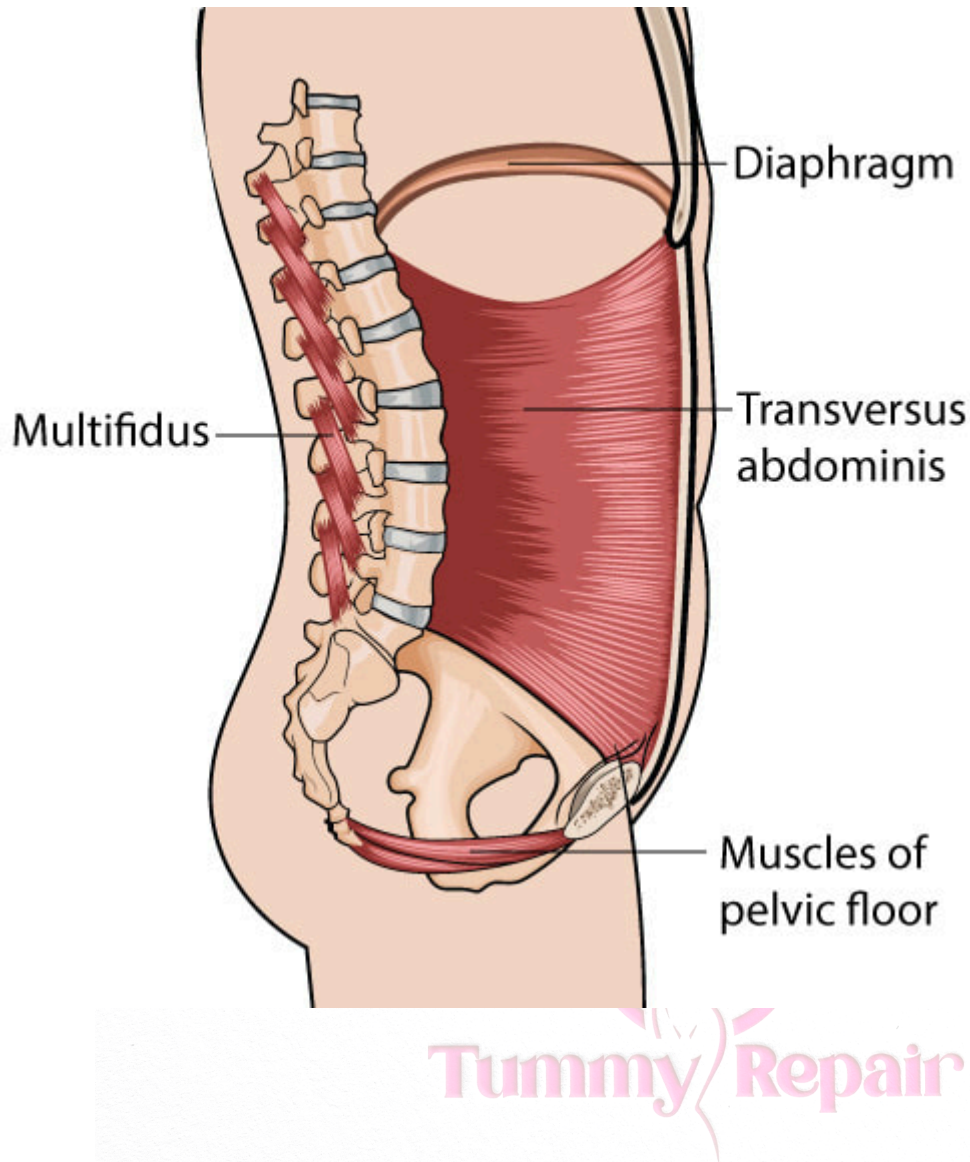
Otherwise called the waist trainer muscle

The transverse abdominis is a crucial muscle situated in the abdominal wall, playing a pivotal role in core stability and support. As the deepest of the abdominal muscles, it runs horizontally across the abdomen, wrapping around the sides and front of the body.

Its primary function involves providing stability and compression to the abdominal region, akin to a natural corset. Unlike the more superficial abdominal muscles responsible for movement, the transverse abdominis acts more as a stabiliser, aiding in maintaining proper posture, supporting the spine, and assisting in breathing and exhalation.

Engagement of the transverse abdominis is often emphasised in exercises like side planks, pelvic tilts, and certain yoga poses. Strengthening this muscle contributes not only to a flatter stomach appearance but also to overall core strength, reducing the risk of lower back pain and enhancing functional movement patterns. Its role as a deep stabilizer makes it an integral component in various athletic activities, everyday movements, and rehabilitation protocols.





## COMMON INJURIES TO THE CORE AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Injuries to The core after childbirth are quite common, especially after vaginal delivery. The core muscles, including the pelvic floor, abdomen, and back, undergo significant stress during pregnancy and childbirth. Some common injuries or issues that can occur include:

1. **Diastasis Recti:** This is the separation of the abdominal muscles, which can cause a visible bulge or pooch in the midsection. It weakens the core and can lead to back pain and pelvic floor issues.
2. **Pelvic Floor Dysfunction:** Childbirth can weaken the pelvic floor muscles, leading to issues like urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, or pain during intercourse.

3. Perineal Tears: Tears or cuts in the perineum (the area between the vagina and anus) can occur during childbirth, particularly in cases of vaginal delivery.

4 Back Pain: The stress of pregnancy and delivery can strain the back muscles, leading to discomfort or pain in the lower back.

Recovery from these injuries often involves specialized exercises, physical therapy, and in some cases, medical interventions. Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels) and core-strengthening exercises are commonly recommended to aid in recovery. [START YOUR FLAT TUMMY JOURNEY HERE.](#)



## DIASTASIS RECTI.

What is it?

Diastasis recti is a condition where the left and right sides of the rectus abdominis (the muscle that forms the "six-pack") **separate**, causing a visible bulge in the abdomen. This causes so many women to look pregnant even months and years after delivery.

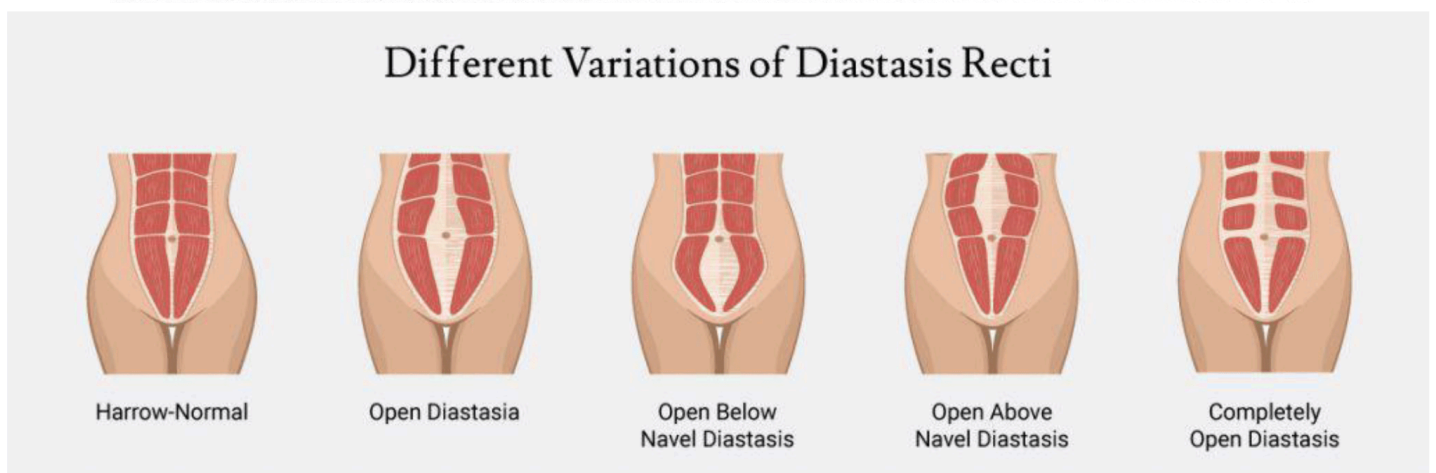
Causes:

**Pregnancy:** The growing uterus stretches the abdominal muscles, causing separation.

**Excessive abdominal pressure:** Heavy lifting, improper weightlifting, or excessive abdominal exercises can lead to this condition.

**Genetics:** Some individuals are genetically predisposed to weaker connective tissues.

### DIFFERENT VARIATIONS OF DIASTASIS RECTI



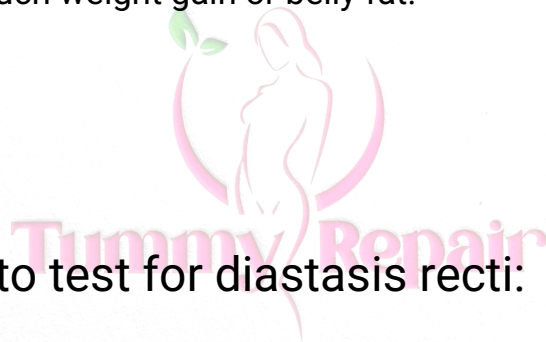
## Symptoms:

1. Visible bulge: A noticeable protrusion or bulge in the abdomen, especially when sitting up or straining.
2. Back pain: Weak abdominal muscles can lead to lower back pain.
3. Poor posture: Diastasis recti can contribute to poor posture and a weakened core. There are also other causes like too much weight gain or belly fat.

## Home Test:

Here's a simple way to test for diastasis recti:

1. Lie on your back: Bend your knees and place your feet flat on the floor.
2. Place fingers on your abdomen: With fingers pointing downwards, place them just above your belly button.
3. Lift your head and shoulders: Gently lift your head and shoulders off the floor, keeping your abdominal muscles relaxed.
4. Feel for a gap: Check for a gap between the left and right sides of the muscles. A gap wider than two finger-widths might indicate diastasis recti.





## Treatment Options

- 1 Physical therapy: Targeted exercises can help strengthen the abdominal muscles.  
Proper exercise: Avoid exercises that strain the abdominal muscles and focus on those recommended by a physical therapist.
- 2 Surgery: In severe cases, surgery might be recommended, particularly if the condition causes significant discomfort or affects daily life.

## Prevention:

Proper postnatal care: Gentle exercises and proper postpartum care can aid in preventing diastasis recti after pregnancy. [start your healing journey here](#)

Proper lifting techniques: Avoid lifting heavy weights improperly, especially if you're not engaging your core muscles correctly.

While these measures can help manage diastasis recti, it's essential to consult a healthcare professional, especially for severe cases or if the condition causes significant discomfort or pain.

## **SOME EXERCISE THAT HELP YOU START HEALING DIASTASIS RECTI**

Here are two exercises that Can help heal diastasis recti and flatten your tummy. However, it's crucial to consult with a certified postpartum coach or a physical therapist before starting any exercise routine to ensure it's safe and appropriate for your specific situation.

Also before starting any DR exercises it's important that you know how to properly engage your core .

### **HOW TO PROPERLY ENGAGE YOUR CORE**

**Mindful Breathing:** Start by focusing on your breath. Inhale deeply through your nose, allowing your belly to expand, and then exhale fully through your mouth, drawing your belly button gently toward your spine. This diaphragmatic breathing activates the transverse abdominis, a deep core muscle essential for stability.

**Pelvic Tilt Exercise:**

- Step 1: Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Step 2: Engage your abdominal muscles by gently pulling your belly button towards your spine without holding your breath.

- Step 3: Slowly tilt your pelvis upward, pressing your lower back into the floor. Imagine flattening your back against the floor.
- Step 4: Hold this position for 5-10 seconds while maintaining normal breathing.
- Step 5: Relax and return to the starting position.
- Repeat: Aim for 10-15 repetitions, gradually increasing as you feel more



comfortable.



### Quadruped Arm and Leg Raise

- Step 1: Start on your hands and knees (quadruped position), ensuring your wrists are under your shoulders and knees are under your hips.
- Step 2: Engage your core muscles by gently pulling your belly button towards your spine.
- Step 3: While maintaining a stable spine, slowly lift your right arm straight out in front of you while simultaneously extending your left leg straight back behind you.

- Step 4: Hold this position for a few seconds while keeping your hips and shoulders squared (avoid arching your back or rotating your hips excessively).
- Step 5: Return to the starting position and switch sides, raising your left arm and right leg.
- Repeat: Aim for 8-10 repetitions on each side, gradually



increasing as you feel stronger.



#### Remember:

- Breathing: Focus on breathing steadily and avoid holding your breath during these exercises.
- Consistency: Consistency is key, but listen to your body. Start slowly and gradually increase repetitions as your strength improves.
- Quality over Quantity: Ensure proper form throughout the exercises rather than rushing through them.
- Consultation: It's crucial to physical therapist for personalised guidance and modifications tailored to your specific condition and recovery needs.

INCONTINENCE

Incontinence after childbirth, especially urinary incontinence, is relatively common and often resolves on its own over time. The physical stress of pregnancy and childbirth can weaken the pelvic floor muscles, leading to difficulties controlling the bladder or bowel.

There are a few types of incontinence that can occur after childbirth:

1. Stress incontinence: This is the most common type after childbirth. It happens when there's pressure on the bladder due to activities like sneezing, laughing, or exercising.
2. Urge incontinence: This is characterised by a sudden, intense urge to urinate followed by an involuntary loss of urine. It may be caused by an overactive bladder.
3. Mixed incontinence: This is a combination of stress and urge incontinence.

Overflow incontinence: This occurs when the bladder doesn't empty properly, leading to leakage.

While it can be distressing, there are various ways to manage and treat post-childbirth incontinence:



- Pelvic floor exercises: Kegels and other pelvic floor exercises can help strengthen the muscles that control urination and bowel movements.
- Physical therapy: Some women benefit from physical therapy to help retrain their pelvic floor muscles.
- Lifestyle changes: Maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding constipation, and limiting caffeine and alcohol intake can improve symptoms.
- Medical interventions: In severe cases, a doctor might recommend medication or surgical procedures to address incontinence.

It's essential to consult a healthcare professional if incontinence persists or significantly impacts your quality of life. They can provide personalized advice and treatment options tailored to your situation. [JOIN SNAP BACK BUNDLE](#)

Remember, postpartum incontinence is a common issue, and seeking help is a positive step towards managing and improving the condition.

Reclaiming your core strength after childbirth involves gradual and mindful exercises to help restore abdominal muscles, improve posture, and regain stability. Here are the key steps:

Before starting any exercise routine postpartum, consult your doctor or a physiotherapist. They can assess your condition and provide personalized guidance. Focus on breathing exercises: Practice diaphragmatic or deep breathing to engage your core muscles. This helps in activating the deep abdominal muscles, promoting healing, and restoring strength.

Begin with gentle exercises: Start with gentle movements, such as pelvic tilts, gentle stretching, or postpartum yoga. These exercises help in reconnecting with your core muscles without straining.

Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels): Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles is crucial after childbirth. Kegel exercises can help improve pelvic floor tone and support.

Gradual progression: As your body strengthens, gradually progress to more challenging exercises like planks, bridges, and modified crunches. Ensure proper form and avoid exercises that strain your abdominal muscles excessively.

Avoid high-impact exercises initially: Steer clear of high-impact exercises like running or intense abdominal workouts until your core muscles have sufficiently recovered.

Be patient and consistent: Recovery takes time, so be patient with yourself.

Consistency in doing exercises and gradually increasing intensity is more important than rushing the process.

Consider professional guidance: Working with a qualified postpartum fitness trainer or physical therapist can be immensely beneficial. They can create a customized exercise plan tailored to your specific needs and monitor your progress.

**Maintain good posture:** Focus on maintaining proper posture throughout the day. This helps in engaging core muscles and preventing strain on weakened areas.

**Take care of your overall health:** Adequate rest, hydration, and a balanced diet are crucial for postpartum recovery and rebuilding core strength.

Remember, every woman's postpartum recovery journey is different. Listen to your body, progress at your own pace, and prioritize your health and well-being throughout the process.



RESOURCES

PUBLICATIONS FROM MAYO CLINIC

NAFISAT O QUAZEEM A guide for diastasis recti recovery for women

