

Abdominal Separation

Diastasis recti (also known as **abdominal separation**) is a disorder defined as a separation of the rectus abdominis muscle into right and left halves. Normally, the two sides of the muscle are joined at the linea alba the body midline.

This condition has no associated morbidity or mortality. The distance between the right and left rectus abdominis muscles is created by the stretching of the linea alba which connects the two regions.

Diastasis of this muscle occurs principally in two populations: newborns and pregnant women.

In the newborn, the rectus abdominis is not fully developed and may not be sealed together midline. Diastasis recti is more common in premature and black newborns.

In pregnant or postpartum women, the condition is caused by stretching of the rectus abdominis by the growing uterus. It is more common in multiparous women due to repeated episodes of stretching. When the defect occurs during pregnancy, the uterus can sometimes be seen bulging through the abdominal wall beneath the skin.

Women are more susceptible to develop diastasis recti when over the age of 35, high birth weight of child, multiple birth pregnancy, and multiple pregnancies. Additional causes can be attributed to excessive abdominal exercises during the first trimester of pregnancy.

QUESTION:

I have a diastasis recti since I had my first son 6 years ago, and it got worse after the second one, who is now 20 months old. I briefly spoke with Nicky Knoff about this and she told me to email her, so she could put me in touch with one of your master teachers who had overcome the same problem.

I am feeling very lost and quite desperate at this moment and thinking about doing a surgery. I really need someone to guide me in through this matter, because I am worried about my health and because yoga is already a essential part of my life, so I would like to practice in a safe way.

ANSWER:

I have some muscle separation but mainly a hole (hernia, although it doesn't act like a hernia) in the Linea Alba.

After reading your email and reflecting back on how I managed the tear to enable my stomach muscles to strengthen as they are today, some clear words come to mind, I have noted them below.

Acceptance – this is ok and I need to practice within my own limits. At first I was after a quick fix and didn't know how I could continue my practice, I was really upset.

Patience – continue getting on your mat every day and stay in the present moment.

Awareness – how does that area of my body feel in this posture.

Knowledge – understand what postures will strengthen your abdominals and take it **slowly**, it's ok to take it slowly. I continued to use Knoff Pregnancy Yoga abdominal postures and then moved onto the Foundation syllabus and so on. Very often I needed to add variation to my practice when I was practicing a more challenging syllabus. E.g. practicing the Intermediate syllabus but sticking with the Foundation syllabus abdominal work.

Bandhas – Learn and practice working with your bandhas, let them be your best friend. I like to do this in the car.