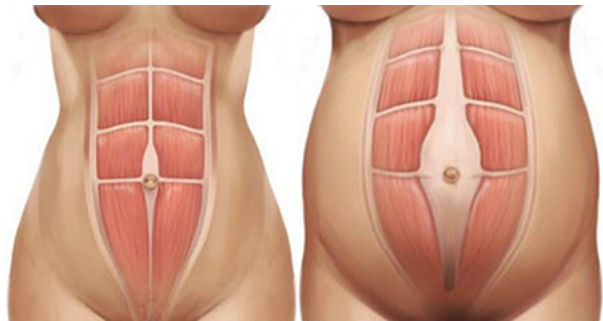


Diastasis Recti – The Dreaded ‘Mummy Tummy’

By Hilary McDermott, Pelvic Health Physiotherapist

Diastasis recti (also known as abdominal muscle separation) has been quite the buzz word lately in social media, but many women are mistaken on what it really is. Many women hear the word “separation” and think that there is a hole in their abdominals or that their abdominals have ripped apart. This is not the case! Let’s start by looking at the anatomy of our abdominals.

In a pre-pregnancy body, the two sides of the abdominal muscles are held closely together by connective tissue that spans from the sternum (breast bone) to the pubic bone. This connective tissue is called the Linea Alba and is normally quite taut in nature. However, when a woman becomes pregnant this tissue will stretch and relax to accommodate a growing baby. This is completely normal and natural, and a women’s body is designed for it! After delivery, this tissue should return to their original state, but sometimes it does not, and this is when diastasis recti is present.



One reason that diastasis recti may not heal on its own is due to the women’s posture or alignment after the baby is born. Typically, women will be hunched over (perhaps breast feeding) or in an extended position like when they were pregnant. Neither of these positions aligns the abdominals for closure and needs to be addressed.

The next reason that our abdominals may not close after delivery is due to inappropriate exercise selection both during pregnancy and postpartum. Conventional abdominal exercises either involve crunching (sit-ups) or increases in abdominal pressure (planks); both of which will put unnecessary strain on the abdominal wall.

Do you think you have diastasis recti? One of the most common signs of this is seeing your belly protrude outwards when doing a crunch. You may also notice that the texture of the Linea Alba is different along its length. If you think you do have diastasis recti, it is important to get checked out by a trained physiotherapist as this can be a symptom of a larger issue in your body that needs to be addressed. Other issues that can arise when you have diastasis recti include lower back pain, pelvic pain, incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, hernia, and of course, the dreaded mummy tummy!

For more information, or to book an appointment with Hilary McDermott, please call Momentum Westbrook at (403) 454 – 1600.

Hilary McDermott, Pelvic Health Physiotherapist



Since graduating from the University of Alberta with a Masters of Science in Physical Therapy, Hilary has continued her education through post graduate courses in pelvic health, advanced manual therapy, acupuncture, Active Release Technique and K-Taping. Her strong orthopedic background assists in her treatment of pelvic health conditions; including urinary and fecal incontinence, over active bladder, pelvic organ prolapse, pre- and post-natal conditions, pelvic pain, and ano-rectal disorders.

Hilary incorporates physiotherapy techniques, postural correction, functional exercise and education in her treatments with the goal of restoring function and preventing recurrence.

Not only has she been successful academically, but Hilary has also represented Canada twice at the University World Games in curling. She continues to stay active through working out, yoga, and climbing.