



THE MAMA'S PHYSIO

Abdominal Care for New Mothers

Diastasis Rectus Abdominus Muscles, or DRAM, refers to a partial separation of a woman's stomach muscles during pregnancy. It occurs in many women during the last weeks of pregnancy, and for most women it will resolve by eight weeks post -partum. For some women, however, the muscles do not automatically come back together and you may need some instruction on re-training this muscle group.

How do I know if this has happened to me?

Your therapist can check for DRAM – painlessly and quickly! She will also show you how to check yourself so you can see how your muscles are recovering



- Lying on your back, your therapist will place two fingers on your tummy at the level of your umbilicus
- She will then ask you to lift your head and neck off the bed, while she feels your muscles to see if there is any separation
- She will also check above and below your umbilicus as these are also common sites of separation



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What can I do if I have DRAM?

Your therapist will show you how to bring the two muscles together using your two hands or by using a towel/scarf. It is important to remember to 'switch on' your deep abdominal or core muscles while doing this, as they will help restore the strength and stability of your abdomen.



Using a hand on either side of your abdomen for support
Inhale and then as you exhale, draw your lower tummy in to your spine & lift your head and neck off the bed
Breathe again, then slowly lower & relax
Repeat x 5



Using a towel or a scarf to gently pull the two sides of your abdomen together, repeat the exercise above



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Gentle Abdominal Strengthening

Once you know how to check your own abdominal muscles, you and your therapist may want to add some other gentle strengthening exercises.

When adding any new exercise:

- Check with your therapist first to make sure this exercise is right for you and that you have a good technique.
- Never hold your breath while doing any exercise.
- It is especially important with any abdominal exercise to activate your deep abdominal/core muscles first: these include your pelvic floor and TA muscles. Please review with your therapist.



Pelvic tilting: With your thumbs on your lower ribs and your fingers on your hips
Exhale & gently draw your lower tummy in to your spine, gently tilting your pelvis up towards your ribs
Hold for 3, then relax
Repeat x 5



Knee drops: Exhale & pull your lower tummy in to your spine. Very slowly lower your right knee out to the side only as far as is comfortable. Slowly bring it back to the center. Relax your tummy muscles
Repeat to the other side
Do 3 reps either side, alternating left and right



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Scar Massage after a C-Section

In the first few weeks after a C-section, it is important to monitor for any signs of infection: redness, oozing, swelling or an increase in pain.

Once you have attended your post-partum check-up, usually at six/eight weeks, your doctor may give you clearance to begin massaging your scar. *It is very important that you do not begin scar massage without discussing it with your doctor.*

Why is scar massage important?

As the tissues in your abdomen heal after surgery, they may become 'stuck' to each other, or to other structures in the pelvis. Some women may develop issues with their bladder or low back pain because of scar tissue adhesions. Scar massage is an easy technique that may prevent this.

How do I start?

Initially, you may want to focus on the tissues above and below the incision line. Lying down comfortably, perhaps with your knees bent, place one hand on your tummy. Don't place your hands directly on your incision, but perhaps a little above (closer to your ribs). Don't use lotion as you want to be able to gently move the skin on your tummy without sliding.

Gently move your hand from side to side, then up and down. If you notice any restrictions, gently hold your hand there for twenty seconds or so. You may feel a gentle release, or it may take a few sessions before you start to feel any movement.

Try the same process below your incision site. Gently place your hand on your lower tummy. See if you can move the skin side to side, then up and down. Try it in a couple of different areas of both your upper and lower abdomen.



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Direct Scar Massage:

Your therapist will be able to guide you when you are ready to progress to working directly on the incision site.

There are a number of different techniques you can use. Start at one end of the incision. Place the tips of your fingers lightly on your skin. See if you can move the skin up and down, right and left. Can you gently rotate it clockwise and anti-clockwise? Work your way down the length of the scar in this manner.

Another technique you can try is skin rolling: Gently 'pinch' the incision between your fingers and thumb and lightly roll it back and forth. Be kind to yourself. This shouldn't be painful! Only massage as much as is comfortable.

