

DIASTASIS RECTI ASSESSMENT

Diastasis Recti refers to an expansion in the space between the rectus abdominis muscles. This is a common condition during pregnancy and postpartum. Learn more about diastasis, including how to assess yourself for the condition.

What is Diastasis Recti or Diastasis Rectus Abdominis (DRA):

DRA occurs when the rectus muscles (or 6 pack muscles) separate, stretching the linea alba, the thin tissue that connects the rectus muscles. A diagnosis of DRA occurs when you have >2 finger distance between the rectus muscles and/or minimal tension on the linea alba. The tension on the linea alba seems to have a greater impact on symptoms than distance alone. In fact, a gap greater than 2 finger distance with good tension is often considered a functional diastasis and presents minimal to no issues in terms of symptoms.

DRA and pregnancy?

100% of full term pregnancies end with some degree of DRA as the muscles in the abdomen naturally shift to allow more room for the growing baby. For many people, the rectus muscles will approximate (or close) on their own as part of the postpartum recovery process.

While you can't prevent DRA in pregnancy, you can look at risk vs reward, movement and breathing strategies, and other techniques to help decrease the pressure on the linea alba.

What are the signs and symptoms of DRA?

The most prominent sign of DRA is coning along the midline of the abdomen. In these instances, intraabdominal pressure seems to be mismanaged and unbalanced, leading to excess pressure and stress on the linea alba. Repeated excess IAP into the linea alba can result in the tissue being stretched or thinned.

How do you reduce intraabdominal pressure (IAP)?

The main way for you to reduce IAP is through your breathing strategies. The first step would be to learn diaphragmatic breathing. Once you have diaphragmatic breathing understood, you can try adding in a TA contraction on your exhale to see if that helps you reduce symptoms. (There are videos for both diaphragmatic breathing and TA contraction in The Pelvic Lab.)

If you notice coning when you are exercising, try doing a diaphragmatic inhale at the start of the movement then exhaling, blowing through your mouth like you're blowing out a birthday candle, on the exertion part of the movement. If that isn't enough to reduce coning, try adding in a TA contraction as well on the exhale.

How do you treat DRA?

Surgery to correct DRA is only one option. Most people are able to work with a qualified coach and PFPT to gain better core connection and pressure management strategies to help rehab a diastasis.

Click the photo below to watch the video and learn how to assess yourself for DRA. Please note that this video is not intended to serve as a diagnostic tool. Please visit a PFPT for an accurate diagnosis.

