



Diastasis Recti Evaluation

an online resource
created to accompany

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Chapter 6, page 202





Diastasis Recti Evaluation

Intention

To evaluate the extent of separation of the rectus abdominis after pregnancy.



Procedure

This procedure is best performed in the supine position.

- 1) Stand at the pelvic level facing the client's head. Place the fingertips of your inside hand at the umbilical level, paralleling the rectus fibers.
- 2) Press into the muscular layers. Maintaining a gentle pressure, instruct your client to lift her head and upper torso from the table. Monitor whether and to what extent your fingers fall into any space between the rectus when it tightens with this movement. Assess tissue texture for tautness or softness.



3) Be alert to any bulging of abdominal tissues that also may occur in this space.

4) Check several inches above and below the umbilical level.

5) If two or more of your fingers fall into a soft space between the tightened two sides of the rectus abdominis (or if abdominal tissues bulged upward through the diastasis), this is considered to be a separation of the muscles. This client might benefit from specific guidance in how to protect from further separation, especially while doing abdominal strengthening exercises.

Hints

1) Work within your scope of practice in educating your client's abdominal recovery. If appropriate, you may instruct her in abdominal strengthening that includes support for the separation. She can create this support by reaching across her torso with each hand to hold the opposite edge of her rectus toward the midline whenever performing abdominal strengthening activities. When she performs correct exercise regularly up to 50 times a day, healing usually occurs within a few weeks. Recheck her in each subsequent session to give her feedback on her progress.

2) Consult other resources for detailed instruction on progressive, appropriate abdominal exercise, and share them with your client, when appropriate. Refer clients for physical therapy when outside of your scope and/or when separation exceeds one hand's width or if separation does not close within 3 months of supported, appropriate exercise.

3) Clients with chronic back pain whose pregnancies were years ago may also be experiencing the effects of diastasis recti. Use these same evaluation and corrective guidelines with them too.