

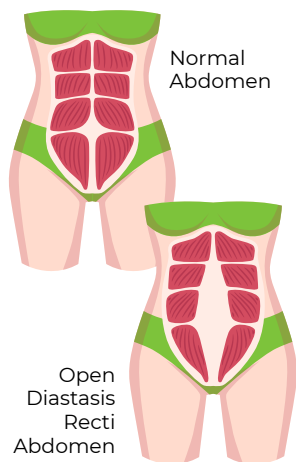
MIND THE GAP

BY MOLLY BOYLAN, MS, LAT, ATC

You were pregnant for nine months and delivered a beautiful baby (or babies). You watched and felt your body change throughout the entire process. It can be alarming to some women all the changes that take place mentally and physically after delivery. One of the changes which is most noticeable is the weakening of core strength. As an industrial athlete, having a strong core is essential for balance, stability, proper posture, reducing injuries, and performing daily job tasks and activities. What can we do to manage this weakness and revert to our original strength?

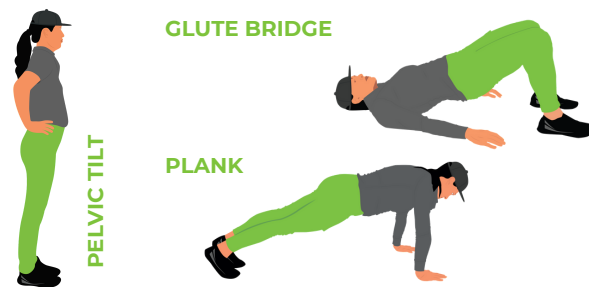
DIASTASIS RECTI

During the postpartum period, hormonal shifts cause ligament laxity, and the abdominal muscles that were stretched during pregnancy can lead to core weakness. **Around 60% of women** develop separation of their rectus abdominis (your 'six-pack' muscles) which is a condition called *diastasis recti*. If not addressed, diastasis recti can lead to poor posture, back pain, and a weak core.



PREVENTION STRATEGIES (cont.)

- Avoid exercises that put pressure on your abdominal muscles.
- Try exercises that focus on core strengthening such as pelvic tilts, glute bridges, and planks. *Click on each image for a description:*




PREVENTION STRATEGIES

There are ways to prevent diastasis recti *during pregnancy* or stop it from worsening. Let's tackle some prevention strategies!

- First, follow your healthcare provider's recommendations for weight gain to limit any added pressure on your abdominal muscles.
- Having good posture is important when sitting, standing, and getting out of bed.
 - When transitioning out of bed in the morning, roll onto your side and use your arms to push yourself up. When lifting use your legs and avoid any twisting movement.
 - Practice good posture by avoiding heavy lifting that may cause your belly to push out.

- Perform the transverse abdominal muscle squeeze which can be done lying on your back with your feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath in and when exhaling pull your belly button to your spine to engage in your muscles. This exercise can be repeated several times per day.
- For additional support, try a pregnancy belt during the first 6 weeks of the postpartum period to help decrease the muscle separation.

Remember to be kind to yourself. It is just as important to mentally and emotionally recover as it is to physically recover. **Changes do not happen overnight and will take time.** Consult your healthcare provider if you suspect diastasis recti and before starting an exercise program. 

Molly Boylan, MS, LAT, ATC || Molly is a Certified Athletic Trainer with over a decade of experience, starting her journey in 2010. Her educational background includes a Bachelor's degree in Athletic Training and a Master's degree in Clinical Exercise Physiology. Molly's passion for Athletic Training is rooted in her personal history as a multi-sport athlete during her high school and college years. This background drove her to pursue a career in Athletic Training. Presently, she channels her love for sports by coaching her daughter in various athletic endeavors. In her leisure time, she treasures moments spent with her husband and their two children, Emma and Benjamin. They share a deep love for travel and wholeheartedly support the Philadelphia Eagles.



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