

‘Prevalence of rectus diastasis (abdominal separation) in Australian women from pregnancy until 1 year after birth’

Dear Doctor,

I am a plastic surgery doctor at Flinders Medical Centre completing my PhD in rectus diastasis after pregnancy. Rectus diastasis is the separation of the rectus abdominis muscles caused by the hormonal and mechanical influences of pregnancy (Figure 1). Normally, it resolves after birth, however, in some women it persists, leaving them at risk of back pain, urinary incontinence and reduced quality of life. Rectus diastasis is a poorly understood and often overlooked medical condition potentially affecting millions of Australian mothers. Data on the prevalence, natural history, and risk factors of rectus diastasis is lacking.

We are investigating the prevalence of rectus diastasis in a population of Australian primiparous women from pregnancy until one-year post-partum. Using a longitudinal design, we will examine the quality of life, back pain and urinary incontinence of women with patient reported outcome measures (the SF-36, ODI, ICIQ-UI SF, respectively), and correlate these with inter-rectus distances as measured on bedside ultrasound.

We aim to recruit approximately 500-600 women planning to have their first baby at Flinders Medical Centre. Participation involves an ultrasound measurement of women’s abdominal muscles and online surveys at four time points: early pregnancy (<15 weeks gestation), 6-weeks post-partum, 6-months post-partum, and 12-months post-partum. The ultrasound scans are performed voluntarily by me at GP Plus Marion and take less than 5 minutes, and the surveys take less than 10 minutes. Each woman will receive a \$5 K-Mart voucher after each appointment to compensate her for any reasonable travel time.

To recruit such significant numbers of participants, we need your help. If you could please refer any suitable patients to the study via the **QR code** below that would be a significant help.

This research project has been reviewed by the Southern Adelaide Clinical Human Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions regarding the study please feel free to contact me via siobhan.fitzpatrick@sa.gov.au or read more on the study website: <https://abdomicare.org/first-time-mums>.

Kind regards,



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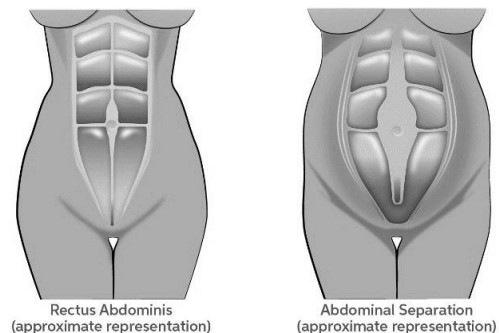


Figure 1. Rectus diastasis or abdominal separation after pregnancy (Source: srchealth.com)



Follow the QR code to refer a participant



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