

# What causes Diastasis Recti in pregnancy and postpartum?

## How does Diastasis Recti happen?

How do we go from this



to this?



## First, let's understand how your core is supposed to function?

People often think of our core from a more superficial point of view and **begin strengthening the outmost/visible muscles**, namely the rectus abdominus, or **6-pack**, shown above.

In a way, this might make sense. **If you don't know how the core functions**, one would be easily led to think, "**Well, since the rectus abdominus is separated, I will do a bunch of crunches to get them to come back together.**"

**Ironically, this approach makes the Diastasis Recti worse!**

Understanding *how the core actually functions* will put you well on your way to understanding what is the better approach to fixing it.

## So, let's dive into the explanation.

Most of us know by now that our core is what literally keeps us stable and upright. It literally keeps us from falling over.

**But how?**

Please know that the answer is **NOT** that the core is made strong by making the abdominal muscles strong. That is only one part of equation.

**Your core is actually a pressure system.** This pressure system **keeps you upright and stable** when all the components are working together in a balanced way to manage the **intra abdominal pressure** of the core as a whole.

Huh??

Let's look at the video bellow. ☐ I have two water bottles. **The one on the right represents a core with optimally managed pressure inside.** Observe how stable it is.

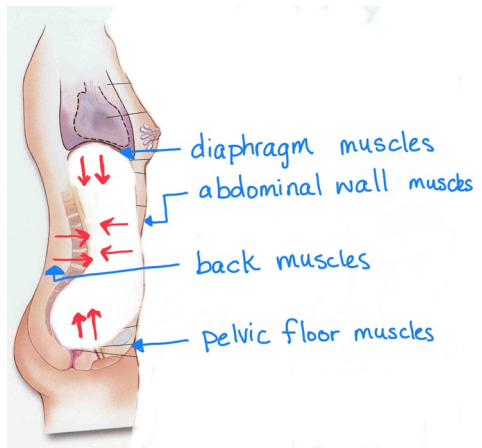
Now, consider the **bottle on the left**. There is no water inside and it has no top. This system is **compromised and is not stable.**

There is pressure inside the bottle on the right that is being well managed by the bottle to keep it stable.

**Pressure and how it's being managed makes all the difference.**

## How does that relate to our core?

**Our core is like a container;** like a bottle is a container. Let's look at the different parts of our container that manage this pressure.



What you are looking at is your pressurized system or your core *container*, so to speak. Imagine the white space in the center of the picture above as the water and air inside the bottle in the video above. The actual container is made up of the following:

- **the top is your diaphragm muscle**
- **the front and sides are your abdominal muscles**
- **the back are the back spinal muscles**
- **the bottom are the muscles of your pelvic floor**

**All of these muscles work together in a balanced way to manage the pressure inside of your core's container.** I put red arrows facing in towards the center of the core to show that when all of the muscles of the core container are strong and functioning optimally, **they keep the pressure in and the pressure keeps our body's upright and stable.**

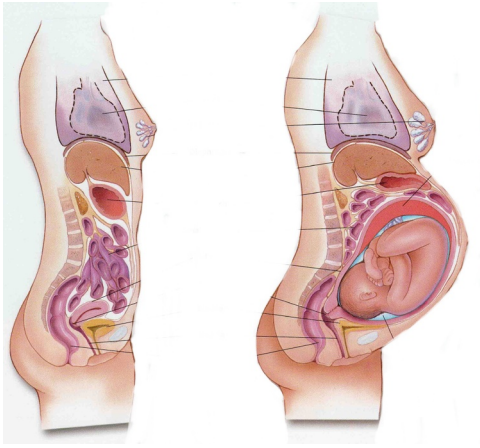
*Let that sink in for a moment.*

All of the bullet points above are important parts of the functionality of your core. **If any of them are compromised, then you get a container that crumbles under pressure**, like how the bottle on the left crumbled under my hand.

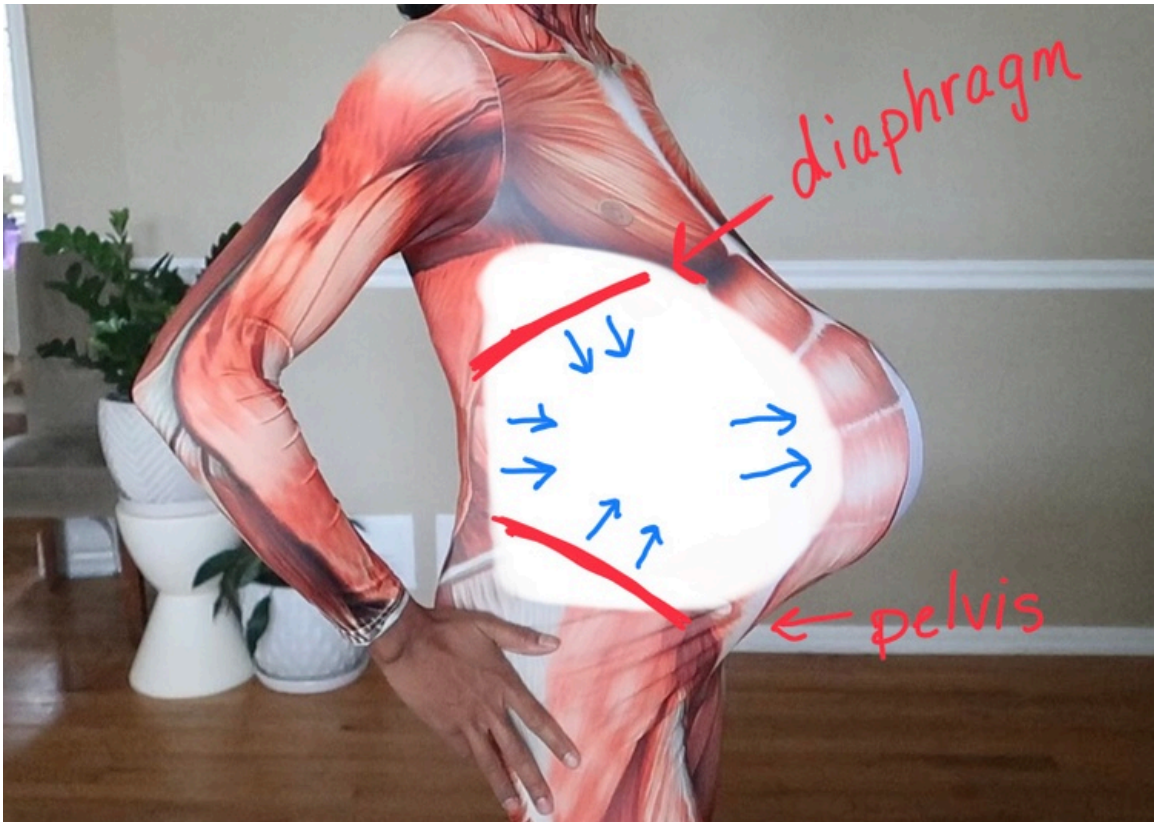
We will be delving into the different aspects of the core container but for now, let's look at how the abdominal muscles are compromised and how that causes Diastasis Recti.

## **What happens to our core container during pregnancy?**

When we become pregnant this happens.



We go from the picture of our core container above (a couple pics above) to looking more like this **compromised core container** below.



When we grow a little human inside of us, **we increase the pressure inside**. Our bodies were wonderfully designed to compensate for this pressure. And...well...**one of the ways we were made to compensate for this is called Diastasis Recti**.

Remember, 100% of women will have Diastasis Recti by the end of their pregnancy.

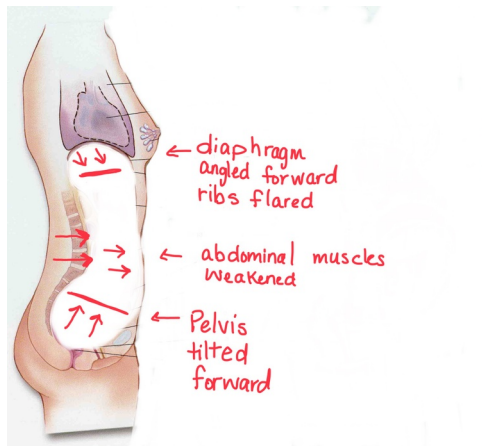
**Being pregnant changes how our core functions and is stabilized**, in many ways. Here are a few I will highlight now (and we will go over this in more depth in the coming weeks).

- **Diaphragm becomes more angled forward** and **now exerts force more forward** instead of straight down
- **Pelvis is more angled forward** as well and **exerts force more forward** instead of straight up
- the **stomach muscles and fascia are weakened and thinned** and aren't able to give much counter pressure to the growing forward force of the baby
- the **back is trying to compensate by becoming tight** to help keep you from falling forward
- the **hip flexors become tighter** to try to stabilize the hips, which are normally more so stabilized by the abdominal muscles

**This is truly an amazing design to enable the body to compensate for the growth of human life.**

## What happens after pregnancy?

Our minds and bodies have adapted to living with a person growing inside of us. **The postural habits and ways of moving with this altered load don't necessarily go away.** We might, especially early post partum, still look like the diagram below.



As you see, there's no baby in there, but our pelvis and diaphragm may still be angled forward, our abdominal muscles may likely still be weakened and our lower back and hips may still be tight.

**It takes some mindfulness and work to re-educate the body to resume optimal core functioning patterns.**

For some of us this will take more work than others...1 in 3 of us, to be exact. I am one of those women. However, I and many women are a testimony that it can be done.

**If you have any questions on this section, please feel free to leave them in the comments section below. This is new information to many and I believe it's wonderful to truly understand what our core is and how it functions.**