

3. Curl-ups

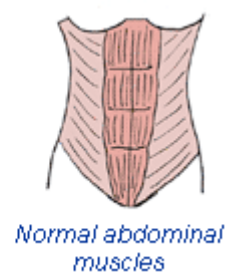
MODULE 6

The exercises in this section are intended to help strengthen your abdominal muscles. Strong abdominal muscles will help you to be more comfortable now and will help you during labour and delivery.

Before you do any abdominal exercises, you need to check for abdominal muscle separation. This separation occurs at the central connecting seam of the abdominal muscles. It may be slight or very noticeable, and it happens to about one out of every three pregnant women. Ask a friend, your partner, health care provider, or prenatal educator to help you check this out.

Here's how to check if you have an abdominal muscle separation.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor.
- Tuck in your chin and slowly raise your head and shoulders until you can see your abdomen.
- If you have a separation, you will usually see a bulge just above or below your belly button. If you are not sure, feel the centre of your abdomen. If you can feel a soft area between two bands of firmer muscle, then you have an abdominal muscle separation.



Here is what to do if you have a separation.

If you have an abdominal muscle separation, you will need to support your abdomen while doing exercises. You can do this by either lacing your fingers together across your abdomen or crossing your arms and putting a hand on either side your abdomen.



There are mixed opinions on when to stop abdominal exercises if muscle separation is present. To avoid all problems, stop abdominal exercises in the second trimester of your pregnancy.

To do the following exercises later in pregnancy, you may want to put pillows under your upper back so you are lying on a slant. This will allow you to continue with your abdominal exercises and place less strain on your trunk.

To begin, this is how to do the curl-ups that will strengthen your abdominal muscles.



This is how to do the diagonal curl-ups - an exercise that strengthens your diagonal abdominal muscles.

CAUTION: Avoid this exercise if you have an abdominal muscle separation.

