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Lose Your Mummy Tummy -- with Julie Tupler, RN

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By [Julie Tupler](#)

WebMD Weight Loss Clinic - Live Events Transcript

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If you have questions about your health, you should consult your personal physician. This event is meant for informational purposes only.

MODERATOR: Welcome to WebMD Live, Julie. We don't all have large babies, but so many of us end up with mummy tummy. Why?

TUPLER: The women or men that do abdominal exercises incorrectly can create a separation for the outer-most abdominal muscle -- the muscle referred to as the "six pack". This separation can cause both the mummy tummy and lower back problems. The outer-most abdominal muscle that separates is the support system for the back. When it separates, it weakens the support system for the organs in the front and weakens the support system for the back causing low back problems.

Most people do not know they have this separation. This separation is caused by a forward forceful movement at the belly button area, which is a weak spot. This forward forceful movement can be caused by the uterus pressing on this weak spot during pregnancy or by doing exercises incorrectly.

MODERATOR: This is called diastasis. Is it inevitable when pregnant?

TUPLER: No. A very small percentage of women do not get it for some reason. Also, if a woman starts doing the Tupler technique abdominal exercises early in her pregnancy she can prevent getting this diastasis.

MODERATOR: How do you know if you have this separation, diastasis?

TUPLER: During pregnancy if a woman lifts her head she might see a little bulge; she will know she has a diastasis. Both during and after pregnancy a woman can check herself for this by lying on her back with her knees bent, heels close to the buttocks; then she puts her fingers pointing down towards her pubic bone into her belly button. She presses down and slowly lifts her head. If she feels a hole in the middle as she lifts her head she knows that she has a diastasis. She can also check three inches below her belly button and three inches above her belly button. The fingers must be pointing down when she is checking herself.

MODERATOR: Can you get rid of the separation now, no matter when you had your last baby?

TUPLER: Yes, absolutely. Research from the Columbia University Department of Physical Therapy done in March 2001 found that the women who did the Tupler technique exercises during pregnancy had a smaller diastasis than the women that did not do these exercises. We have found that even during pregnancy when the uterus is expanding on that weak point of the abdominal area of the belly button, she can keep this separation the same or make it smaller.

We have also worked with women many years after they have had their baby, as well as our clients' mothers, and helped them get this separation back together. Getting the separation back together involves four things:

- Doing the Tupler-technique-seated exercises every day.
- Getting up and down correctly when getting in and out of bed.
- Engaging this inner most abdominal muscle used during the Tupler technique exercise with everything -- meaning with all the activity she does (sneezing, coughing, picking up their baby, exercising, going to the bathroom, getting in and out of bed, getting up and out of a chair, etc.).
- Using a splint, which is a long scarf-like piece of fabric that we make at Maternal Fitness to make the starting position of the muscle closer together when doing the exercises.

MEMBER QUESTION: Can you explain the Tupler technique?

TUPLER: The Tupler technique focuses on strengthening the inner-most abdominal muscle, which is called the transverse muscle. This muscle is like a corset and wraps around your whole midsection. The action of the muscle is forward and backward. This is the muscle we use in breathing. This inner most muscle, which goes forward and backward, is attached to this outer-most muscle. So, when the inner-most muscle goes back towards the spine, it brings the outer-most muscle with it, making this separation smaller. When you strengthen the transverse muscle you also strengthen the outer-most recti muscle.

A woman can do these exercises sitting in a chair, sitting in her car or sitting against a wall so her back does not move. She imagines her belly button is the engine that moves the belly back towards the spine. She brings her belly button to the spine and then does little squeezes out the back of her spine. With each squeeze she counts. One set is 100 of these little squeezes, which takes two and

a half minutes. She needs to do at least five sets of 100 of these squeezes every day.

She must also think about bringing her belly button back to the spine with everything that she does: when she sneezes, coughs, goes to the bathroom, gets up and down, exercises, etc. When she can't hold the belly button to the spine when she does any activity or exercise, that is an indication that she should not be doing that activity or exercise. If she can't hold the belly button in at the spine, it means it will be going forward forcefully at the spot of the belly button, making that separation (diastasis) larger.

Regarding the breathing, when doing these squeezes you must count out loud because that forces you to breathe. It is shallow breathing, but at the end of the exercises we take some nice deep belly breaths.

MODERATOR: We are all sitting in front of our computers now. Let's try it.

MEMBER QUESTION: Will the Tupler method help if I only have a problem with lower tummy, if the area above the belly button is firm?

TUPLER: Yes, absolutely. The transverse muscle goes above and below the belly button. You can focus doing these little squeezes below the belly button, imaging your pubic muscle going back to the spine.

MEMBER QUESTION: Do you mean that once you bring the belly button in you contract the abdominals? Please clarify. How would one squeeze the back?

TUPLER: The transverse comes all the way around. When you bring your belly button back to the spine you are using your abdominal muscles, you are bringing them back towards your spine, or your back. You should feel these squeezes in your abdominals in the front and in your back muscles.

MEMBER QUESTION: Is this technique similar to holding in your breath, but continuing to breathe while tightening stomach muscles?

TUPLER: When doing this exercise, it feels like you are holding your breath because you are breathing shallowly. If you count out loud it forces you to take a breath, even if it is a shallow breath. It is not about holding your breath and doing this exercise.

MEMBER QUESTION: Will this work for someone who has had four C-sections, both kinds of incisions?

TUPLER: Absolutely. These exercises will work great for women who have had a C-section. I must first address the issue of mobilizing your scar from a C-section. This just means picking the scar up and rolling it between your fingers so it does not stick in the tissues underneath it. Women who have done the Tupler technique during their pregnancy and had a C-section, usually had a faster recovery.

MEMBER QUESTION: So then you would keep your belly button drawn in and just sort of pulse that same muscle you used to draw it in? And you recommend doing about 100 per day, correct?

TUPLER: The exercise is doing an isometric little squeeze. Think about bringing your belly button from your spine to out the back of your spine. One set of these little squeezes is 100 squeezes, which takes two and a half minutes. A woman needs to be doing 5 sets of 100 daily for the first six weeks, and then for the rest of her life she needs to be doing a minimum of 10 sets of 100 and engaging this muscle on the work of everything that she does. So the first six weeks it is 500 a day; after that it is a minimum of 1000 a day. It is best to break them up in sets of 300.

MODERATOR: And that goes for those who had their babies a long time ago as well as new moms, correct?

TUPLER: That goes for everybody. These exercises are for everybody.

MEMBER QUESTION: As I try this technique I find that I am doing Kegels also, is this incorrect?

TUPLER: It is not incorrect to do. When you engage the transverse, the pelvic floor muscle also contracts. That is perfectly fine.

MODERATOR: Two for the price of one!

MEMBER QUESTION: How important is posture in this technique?

"Using your abdominal muscles during pregnancy by strengthening them is the most important thing you can do during your pregnancy."

TUPLER: Posture is very important. It is very important for a woman to be seated and have her shoulders lined up with her hips. If she is seated on the floor against the wall she should sit in a cross-legged position. If she is seated in a chair her shoulders should be lined up with her hips, her knees and hips on the same plane -- which means she may need to put a foot stool under her feet. While doing these exercises it is important for her back not to move, either from the top or from the bottom.

MODERATOR: This is just one of the exercises?

TUPLER: These squeezes are the foundation of the Tupler technique. We incorporate them into the whole routine. Which means when I'm working my upper body, I'm working my transverse muscles; when I'm working my lower body I'm working my transverse abdominal muscles. If she strengthens the transverse muscle in a seated position first, a woman will then be able to engage her abdominal muscles correctly when doing head lifts in a back line position.

MODERATOR: How does this affect the back?

TUPLER: The transverse muscle inserts into each side of your spine. The top of the muscle goes from the bottom six ribs; the bottom of the muscle is at the top of the pelvis. That's the height of the muscle. It goes around and it inserts into the outer most muscle. So, when you engage the transverse, you are not only working the transverse muscle that inserts into your spine, you're working the recti muscle, or the outer-most muscle, which is the support system for the back. You will also be working the lumbar multifidus muscles, which are the muscles that go between the discs of your lumbar spine. Working all these muscles helps to strengthen your back.

MEMBER QUESTION: This may seem silly, but will your technique help me get back my innie belly button which became an outie during my pregnancy?

TUPLER: I can't promise that. In the process of doing these exercises, it may become an innie again. No promises, though.

MEMBER QUESTION: Ms. Tupler, I know this is about losing your tummy afterwards, but since this is my first baby, can you tell me a little about what to expect during childbirth? I am very slim. Will that increase my pain during labor?

TUPLER: Using your abdominal muscles during pregnancy by strengthening them is the most important thing you can do during your pregnancy. Strong abdominal muscles will:

- Prevent back problems
- Keep the diastasis smaller
- Help you push your baby out more effectively
- Help your abdominals get back in shape faster, as they have muscle memory from doing the exercises during pregnancy.

You can find out more about this in the Maternal Fitness book or the DVD.

MEMBER QUESTION: I thought you were supposed to avoid any abdominal exercises during pregnancy?

TUPLER: That is an old wives' tale and a young wives' tale. The registered nurses and physical therapist at Maternal Fitness have been doing abdominal exercises with pregnant women all the way up to their due date since 1990. The Maternal Fitness book has been endorsed by Dr. Raul Artal, who is one of the main authors of the ACOG, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. It is important to do abdominals correctly, during pregnancy, as it can make the separation of the abdominals larger if done incorrectly.

The other issue is doing abdominal muscles in a back line position. We only keep women in a back line position for three to five minutes. However, she is instructed to roll to her side if she feels light-headed or dizzy to get the weight of the uterus off the main blood vessel called the vena cava.

MODERATOR: What other postpregnancy problems can your technique help with?

TUPLER: Using abdominal muscles after pregnancy can also help with either preventing hemorrhoids or helping them to heal.

MEMBER QUESTION: How does this exercise differ from doing crunches?

TUPLER: This is a great question. This technique is different from normal crunches because in a normal crunch, a person is only shortening the recti muscle from the top of the muscle and the bottom of the muscle. The middle of the muscle comes forward forcefully in doing a normal crunch. When doing the Tupler technique exercises we are working the top, middle and bottom of the recti muscle. The most important part of any sit-up is working the recti muscle from the middle. If you are not working the recti from the middle and it is coming forward forcefully, if you have a diastasis it will get larger; if you do not have one, you will create one on yourself.

MEMBER QUESTION: In your experience, how long does it take to see results? And what kinds of results are typical?

TUPLER: In the Maternal Fitness workshops during and after pregnancy we check women for a diastasis in the first class and in the last class. The workshops are six weeks. We see results of the diastasis getting smaller within the six weeks. However, it is important for me to remind women that it is not only important to do the exercises, but they must get in and out of bed correctly. If they do not get in and out of bed correctly, then they will be putting a forward forceful movement on this weak spot and will not see any positive results.

MEMBER QUESTION: I need to see exercises in order to do them correctly. Do you have a video that shows how to do the Tupler technique?

TUPLER: Yes, I do. I have the Maternal Fitness video, which is on VHS and DVD. The same exercises I teach pregnant women during pregnancy are the same exercises we do with women after pregnancy. So you can see these exercises on this video or DVD. Or you can come to one of my Lose Your Mummy Tummy seminars. A schedule of the cities I will be doing them in is on my web site, which is www.maternalfitness.com

MEMBER QUESTION: I'm in my 50s. Will my age affect how well this technique works for me? Or how long it will take to get good results?

TUPLER: No, your age has nothing to do with it. These exercises will give you the same results as if you were in your 20s or 30s.

MEMBER QUESTION: Is the main goal of the technique to prevent/treat diastasis? Or will this also help with the tone of the lower belly?

TUPLER: These exercises help bring the separation of the recti back together

and also help with the toning of the muscle. Bringing the separation back together is important as the outer-most muscle is a support system for the organs and the back. The closer it is together the better it supports your back and your organs.

MODERATOR: This should also help those who are planning another pregnancy.

TUPLER: It is important for a woman to do these exercises after her first or second pregnancy to bring this separation back together. If she does not bring this separation back together and she gets pregnant, it will then get a lot bigger during her next pregnancy. The bigger the diastasis, the weaker the support system for the back and organs and the harder it is to get it back together after the pregnancy.

MODERATOR: We are almost out of time, Julie. Before we wrap things up for today, do you have any final words for us?

TUPLER: I am doing "Lose Your Mummy Tummy" seminars all over the U.S. so that I can teach women this technique, as well as check them for their diastasis. The schedule for seminars can be found at the Maternal Fitness web site at www.maternalfitness.com. The cost is \$50.00 and includes a friend. It is a five-hour workshop. Besides learning the Tupler technique you will have a lot of fun at these seminars. We will even teach you how to use your transverse when you are laughing!

MODERATOR: If there isn't a workshop in your area, you can read about the exercises and see photographs in Julie's book.

MODERATOR: Our thanks to Julie Tupler for joining us today. And thanks to you, members, for your great questions. I'm sorry we couldn't get to all of them. For more information, please read *Lose Your Mummy Tummy* by Julie Tupler.

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