

Pelvic Floor and Diastasis 6 Part Course

Part 2: Breathing Exercises

We all have different causes for tightness, restrictions, or ingrained patterns. Air and pressure follow the path of least resistance.

Use breathing drills to

- Help open the path of most resistance.
- Improve intercostal strength to aid with rib cage mobility and decrease overusing abs, which in turn reduces pressure down on the pelvic floor.

Side-Lying Breathing



Focus on single-sided rib cage movement and diaphragm expansion.

- Lie on your side, with your head resting on a pillow or towel roll and your shoulder directly underneath you
- Curl into a slight ball with knees at hip height and pelvis slightly tucked under. Your spine should be in a slight C shape
- Use your bottom side abs to keep your bottom side lifted off of the floor
- Place your fingers under your top rib cage with your thumb wrapped around the back
- Inhale, and feel the expansion in your top ribs and diaphragm as your hand gets pushed out
- Exhale completely, getting your rib cage down
- As you exhale, gently push your top rib in with your hand (using a “ha” breath is best). This can help set you up for an even better inhale
- You can either lift your hand for the next big inhale that fills everywhere, or keep some pressure with your hand to get more air to go into your back
- Watch out for shallow breathing, making sure that your shoulder and neck don’t move up on the inhale

Troubleshooting tips

- If you’re having a hard time keeping your bottom side abs lifted, use a towel roll or pillow under your bottom side ribs to assist.
- If you feel all the air going into your belly, curl into more of a ball or use a pillow between your thighs and belly, making the path of least resistance your back and sides instead of your belly.
- Check out the [Rib Cage Smash](#) to help with some rib mobility before trying this exercise.

“HA” Breathing

- Great for a narrow ISA by improving the rib cage ROM.
- Great for a wide ISA by getting the ribs moving in and out.
- Good for diastasis because it helps narrow the infrasternal angle, decreases pressure on the midline, and gets the ribs moving.



- Sit on a chair or on the floor
- Completely relax your belly, and slouch just a bit
- Place hands on your rib cage, with your thumbs wrapping around the back
- Inhale, and feel the expansion in your back and rib cage, making sure your abs let go
- Exhale with a very gentle, open-mouthed “ha” breath. Use your hands to encourage the ribs to move in and down. Your belly stays fully relaxed so that no pressure goes down into the pelvic floor
- Inhale, holding your ribs in and inhaling into your thumbs
- Exhale with a “ha” breath again, taking up the slack in your ribs a bit more, with your abs staying completely relaxed
- Inhale and hold the new rib position as you feel the side of your hand and thumbs being pushed out
- Try it 3-5 times. Do this throughout the day. It may take a lot of practice!
- Make sure to get full, complete inhales and exhales, but without straining. A nice, full exhale should help make the inhale feel even better

Tips

- **Narrow ISA:** Stop before you get any abdominal engagement.
- **Wide ISA:** If not feeling pressure down on the pelvic floor, add an abdominal contraction to the end of the exhale, emptying from the bottom up.
- Monitor for shallow breathing, watching that your shoulders don’t lift up and your neck doesn’t feel tense.