

PELVIC FLOOR AND DIASTASIS

6 PART COURSE

Part 2: Troubleshooting Rib Cage Mobility

Rib cage mobility and the way we breathe can affect many parts of our body. Oftentimes the rib cage gets stuck, or movement is limited. Use these drills to knock off the rust and get things moving better! These exercises are meant to be passive, using props and gravity to help. Make sure to avoid forcing the movement, but try to relax into it. Sometimes this can take 5-10 breaths.

Caution: If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, be sure to use a towel roll. If you feel dizzy, don't do as many breaths in a row.

Crocodile Breathing

Goal

- Encourage your breath to go down into your back and sides while opening up your chest wall to help improve posture. Addresses anterior/posterior rib cage movement.
- Used to help address compressed chest wall/rounded shoulders.



Before

After

When we inhale, the expansion often tends to happen in our belly or front lower ribs. By blocking those areas with props, we can help our breath go more to the back and sides. Keeping your hands under your head and your chest wall free creates more opening in the anterior chest wall that can help with rounded shoulders, upper ab gripping, and neck tension.

On the exhale, this blocked position helps the ribs go back while maintaining a long spine to avoid putting pressure down on the pelvic floor, helping to unstick the scapula from the rib cage and improve posture.

Equipment

- 2 rolled up yoga mats, towel rolls, or pillows



- Lie down on your stomach with a yoga mat/towel/pillow at the front lower ribs. Your chest wall is open.
- Place a second yoga mat/towel/pillow under your hips and pelvis. This helps the hips drape down and over, creating some traction and length in the lumbar spine.
- Your hands are under your forehead. Stack them if needed, or use a towel. You don't want any tension in your neck, and your throat should be open.
- Inhale into your back, sides, and hips. Feel your chest wall expand toward the ground as your lungs fill with air.

- Exhale all of the air out, trying to make the exhale twice as long as the inhale and as relaxed as possible.
- Inhale and exhale, feeling your body relax toward the ground even more with each breath.
- Repeat a few more times.
- You can turn your head to the side if it's more comfortable.
- Try for 2 sets of 5-10 breaths.

Rib Cage Smash

Goal

- Use gravity and props to encourage rib cage mobility while ensuring your abs stay relaxed. This addresses the lateral movement of the rib cage and relative movement between the individual ribs.

Equipment

- A rolled up yoga mat, foam roller, or yoga block. Try to find something a little bit firm so your rib cage gets the smash rather than the object you are lying on. Your ribs might feel tender with something too firm, so if you can't relax into the position, use something softer to start.



- Lie over the yoga mat so that it lines up under your bottom side ribs.
- Bring your knees up in line with your hips and gently round to help send your inhale to your back.
- **Optional:** Explore a hip shift. Shift your top hip and pelvis up over the bottom, helping to open up the back side of the right pelvis and encourage the breath to go down.

- For those with a narrow ISA or one-sided rib flare:
 - Use rib cage compression on the bottom side to open up the top side
 - Put your hand on the top side ribs, feeling that area expand as you inhale into that side
 - Exhale, relaxing down onto the yoga mat and continue to side bend toward the bottom side ribs
 - If addressing a one-sided rib flare, you'd do this only while lying on the side where the rib is flared



- To work on opening in between individual ribs (helpful for both wide or narrow ISAs):
- Reach your top hand forward and down and inhale into the bottom side instead
 - Helps to rotate the top rib cage up and over the bottom to tuck the bottom ribs up and in
 - Inhale into the bottom side ribs and yoga mat
 - Feel more expansion go into the bottom side chest wall, back, and down into the pelvic floor.
 - Exhale, relaxing into the mat
 - This can help downregulate the abs, improve ribcage mobility, and improve intercostal strength on that side.
- Experiment with breathing into the top side versus the bottom side ribs and see how it feels.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Try for 2 sets of 5 to 10 breaths.