

Inner Core Unit Exercises

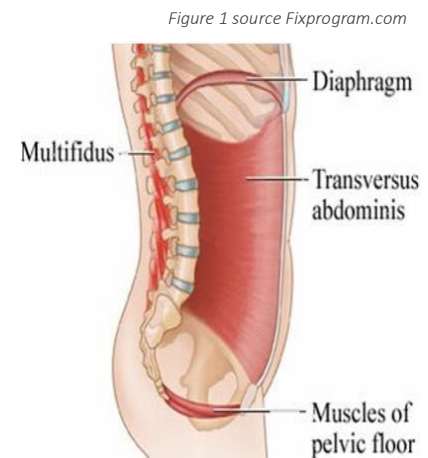
Learning diaphragmatic breathing during pregnancy and post baby is one of the most important tools to help you with daily movement, exercise and injury prevention. The following exercises are to be done daily to encourage a deeper connection to your core and pelvic floor.

Perform each of the exercise below for 1 minute 5 times a week.

1. **Diaphragm Activation-** Helps activate your diaphragm by allowing you to relax the pelvic floor for proper core function.
 - **Extended inhalation:** Place your hands on your belly and take a deep breath in filling your belly and ribs with air. Followed by a gentle exhale. Now perform for 1 minute.
 - **Piston Inhalations:** Take a quick inhale through your diaphragm, with a gentle exhale. You should be able to see a quick expansion of the belly and ribs during inhalation with a gentle exhale. Perform for 1 minute.

2. **Pelvic Floor Activation (PF)-** Connect to the pelvic floor to help strengthen and relax the muscles supporting your organs and baby to address urinary incontinence.

- **On and Off PF activation:** This move has two separate actions. During the **on**, connect to your pelvic floor muscles by pretending to hold your urine (aka kegels). During the **off**, you want to completely release and relax the pelvic floor muscles. As you turn **on** your PF muscles think about not only contracting your pelvic floor but imagine lifting up the pelvic floor towards your belly button. Here are a few cues that may help you connect better. **Cue:** When turning on you PF imagine your PF lifting a handkerchief from the center up. **Cue:** Pretend you're sipping on a smoothie with your vagina. **Cue:** Pretend you're picking up a blueberry with your vagina. During the **off**, you want to completely allow your muscles to relax. **Cue:** release the blueberry, imagine that you're watching smoothie slowly flow down the straw. The emphasis is not only on the contracting of the PF, but also on the release of the PF muscles, as we must create a healthy balance of both. Notice if one feels more dominant than the other and work on the less dominant side. Perform each move for 1 min.
- **Extended hold:** Turn your pelvic floor on (sipping a smoothie, picking up a blueberry) for a count of 3 then release for 3. **Cue:** Try to avoid squeezing your glutes during the hold and make sure to continue breathing. To know if you're breath holding try talking while holding the pelvic floor contraction, this will assure you that you're breathing. Perform for 1 min.



- **Elevators:** Think of your PF as an elevator. A full PF contraction (sipping a smoothie) is level 3, and 0 is a completely and relaxed PF. Now take it to level 1 a quarter of the PF contraction, level 2 half way the contraction hold, now level 3 a full contracted PF (sipping smoothie) with lift. Take the PF elevator back down to level 2 (release half way), level 1 release a little more and zero completely relax. Going up and down the elevator is 1 repetition. Now aim for 1 min.

3. Transverse Abdominus Activation

This move helps you connect to your TVA, our deepest core muscles (see picture above). By activating the TVA it will help balance intra-abdominal pressure (the root cause of Diastasis Recti) and build a strong properly functioning core.

- **Extended Exhale:** Inhale using your diaphragm (belly and ribs fill) and take a long exhale while imagining your hipbones trying to touch one another. This should feel like a wrap or a hug around your abdomen as supposed to pulling your belly button to spine. Perform for 1 minute.
- **Piston Exhale:** Inhale using your diaphragm, now as you exhale make it quick. You should be able to feel and see you belly expanding during the inhale with a quick descending of the belly during the exhalation. Perform for 1 minute

4. TVA+PF (Core breathing belly pump™)

Now after practicing Diaphragmatic and PF activations you can take it a step further with the CBBP™. This is where you will put it all together. This move will help lengthen and strengthen the pelvic floor and help you stay connected to your core to prevent diastasis recti and any other PF dysfunctions. Separation of the abdominals will happen during pregnancy as there is a growing baby, but strengthening your core can reduce the likelihood of diastasis recti post baby. Take note that this move is breath with intention, a deeper exhalation connecting deeper with the inner core.

- **CBBP™:** Inhale through your diaphragm (belly expanding, PF releasing) now exhale with intention by first turning on the pelvic floor followed by an extended exhale activation of the core. I will also refer to this as wrapping of the TVA (Transverse Abdominus) aka hugging your baby. The TVA wraps around your abdomen from the back to the center of your belly like a corset (see picture above) as you exhale you want to imagine someone tightening this corset for you. Here are a few cues to help you feel a deeper connection to your core muscles. **Cue:** as you exhale imagine that you are zipping up a tight pair of jeans from the PF up to your TVA. **Cue:** Imagine your hipbones attempting to touch one another during exhalation.

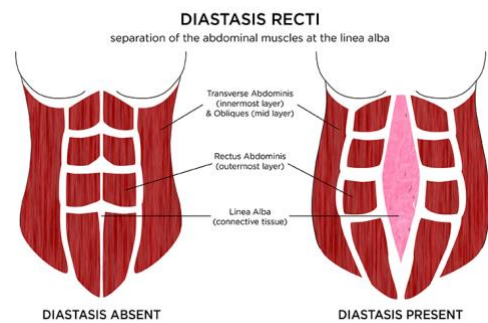


Figure 2 source DLVR Maternity

