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PELVIC FLOOR FITNESS

Rib Flare

Why Your Bra Keeps Getting Tighter And What It's Telling You
About Your Core and Pelvic Floor

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MEET THE EXPERT

Hi, I'm Caroline.

I'm a Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist and mom of three. I created Connect Pelvic Floor Fitness because I lived what you're going through — and because when I finally understood what was actually causing these issues, **everything changed**.



In this guide I'm going to walk you through what rib flare is, why everything you've tried so far has likely made it worse, and what the path forward actually looks like.

This isn't about pulling your ribs down. It's about improving the pressure system that's pushing them up.



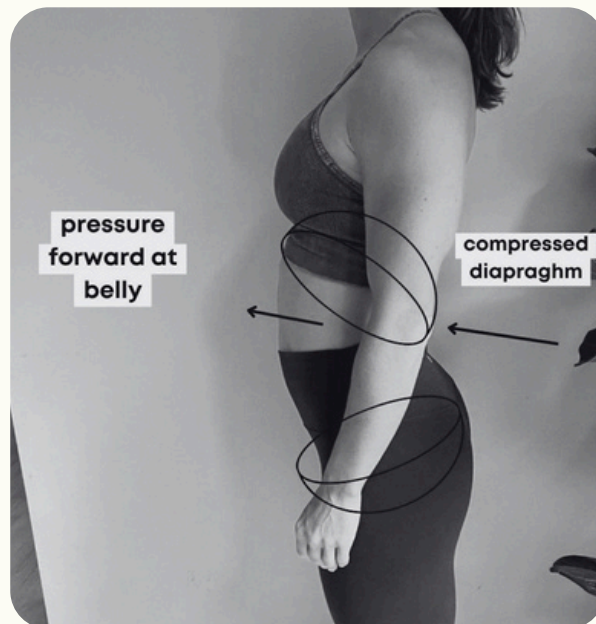
So What Is Rib Flare — And Why Does It Matter?

If your bras keep getting tighter, your lower belly won't flatten, and your core and pelvic floor feel like they've stopped working no matter what you do there's a good chance your ribcage is part of the problem.

Not because something is broken. Because your body has gotten stuck in a position that makes it nearly impossible for your core and pelvic floor to function the way they're designed to.

Here's what's happening:

Your lower ribs are meant to sit relatively neutral, not flared out and angled upward. When they get stuck in that flared position, it sets off a chain reaction that affects everything below: your breathing muscle, your deep core, and your pelvic floor.



And here's the part that explains why everything you've tried hasn't

worked: You can't out-Kegel a ribcage problem. You can't out-crunch it either. If your ribs are flared, your pelvic floor is starting every single rep already in a compromised position. It doesn't matter how hard you squeeze or how many reps you do the foundation is off, so the results won't come.

That's not a willpower problem. That's a position problem. And position is something we can fix.

Your Core Is Not a Six-Pack. It's a System.

Most women think of their core as the muscles in the front of their belly. So when something feels off: leaking, prolapse, a belly that won't flatten, they go after those muscles harder. More crunches. More Kegels. More squeezing.

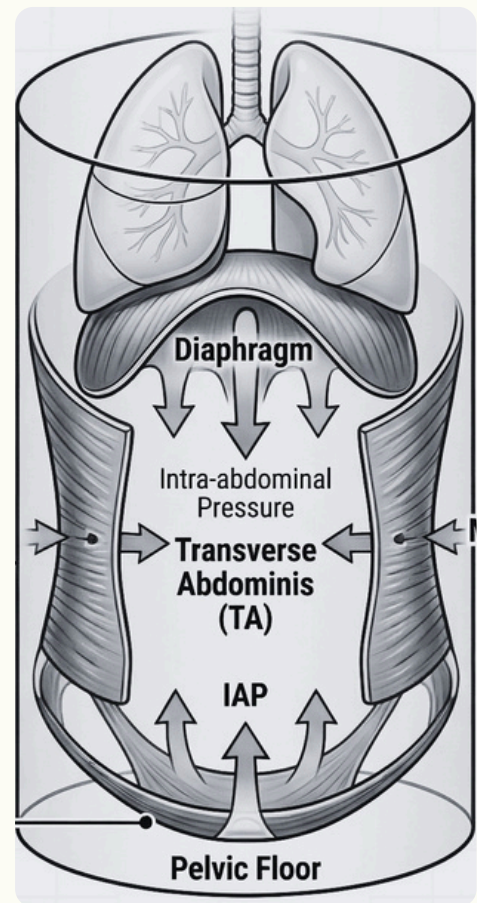
But that's not how your core actually works.

Your core is a pressure system. Think of it like a canister: a container with a top, a bottom, and walls all the way around.

- The **top** is your breathing muscle (the diaphragm)
- The **bottom** is your pelvic floor
- The **walls** are your deep core muscles wrapping around your spine and abdomen

When everything is working together, that canister manages pressure beautifully. Every inhale, every exhale, every squat, every sneeze; pressure moves through the system evenly and your body handles it without leaking, bulging, or pain.

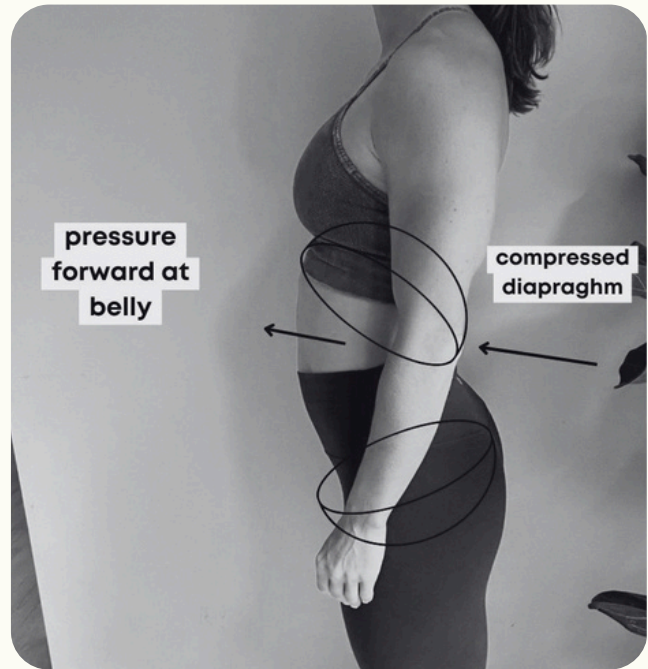
But when your ribs are flared, the top of that canister, your breathing muscle, gets stuck. And when the top is stuck, the bottom gets stuck too. The whole system stops coordinating. Pressure has nowhere to go but forward and down into your belly and onto your pelvic floor.



That's why rib flare shows up as:

- A belly pooch that won't budge
- Leaking with impact or sneezing
- Prolapse symptoms or pelvic heaviness
- A core that feels weak no matter how much you train
- Diastasis that stalls in healing

This is why isolated fixes don't work. You can't fix the bottom of the canister without addressing the top. You have to treat the whole system.



Breathing Is the Starting Point, Here's Why

You take around 20,000 breaths a day. That means your breathing muscle moves 20,000 times a day which makes it either the most powerful tool you have for fixing this, or the biggest thing working against you.

Here's what a healthy breath cycle looks like:

When you inhale, your breathing muscle drops down and flattens, your ribcage expands in all directions, and your pelvic floor gently lowers to match. When you exhale, your breathing muscle lifts back up into a dome shape, your ribcage gently compresses, and your pelvic floor recoils upward.

In. Out. Top and bottom moving together, every single breath.

When your ribs are flared, that exhale never fully happens. Your breathing muscle stays low and flat. Your ribcage stays stuck open. And your pelvic floor, mirroring the top of the canister, stays low and unsupported too.

Over time, that means pressure that should be moving through your whole system is instead pooling at the bottom and sitting on your pelvic floor and pushing into your belly with every breath, every step, every rep.

The good news is this: because your ribcage position is driven by your breathing muscle, retraining your breath is one of the fastest ways to start shifting your rib position. You don't force the ribs down. You teach the breathing muscle to lift and the ribs follow.

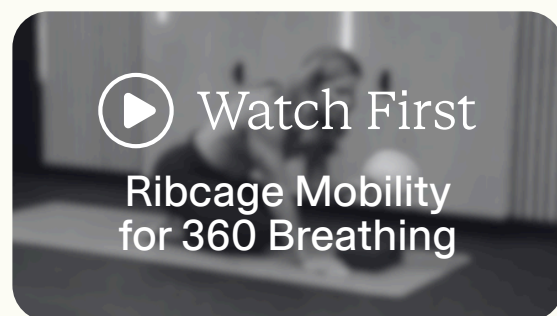
That's where we start.

Step 1: Get Your Ribcage Moving

Before anything else can change, your ribcage needs to be able to move. If your ribs have been stuck in a flared position for a while, the joints have stiffened up — and no amount of breathing cues will work until you restore that mobility first.

This is where most programs start too late. They jump straight to core exercises without addressing the ribcage first, which is like trying to fix a door that's off its hinges without putting the hinges back first.

Ribcage mobility work uses specific positions and breathing patterns to restore movement to the areas that have gotten stuck. It's not complicated. It doesn't require equipment. And it's the foundation everything else is built on.



Step 2: Find The Stack

Once your ribcage is moving, the next step is getting it positioned correctly over your pelvis (known as 'The Stack') → ribs over pelvis, pelvis over feet. When you're in 'The Stack', your breathing muscle and pelvic floor are finally lined up to work together the way they're supposed to.

The 90-90 Hip Lift is the best exercise we have for finding and feeling that position.

1. Lie on your back with your feet flat on the wall, hips and knees at 90 degrees. Press the base of your big toe, pinkie toe, and inner arch evenly into the wall.
2. Gently drag your heels down the wall without actually moving them — you should feel your hamstrings engage and your pelvis lift slightly, about 1-2 inches.
3. Place a small ball or rolled towel between your knees and give it a gentle squeeze.
4. Reach your right arm long overhead toward the wall.
5. Rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth, jaw relaxed, and take a soft inhale through your nose.
6. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, emptying all the air out.
7. Repeat for 5 breaths.

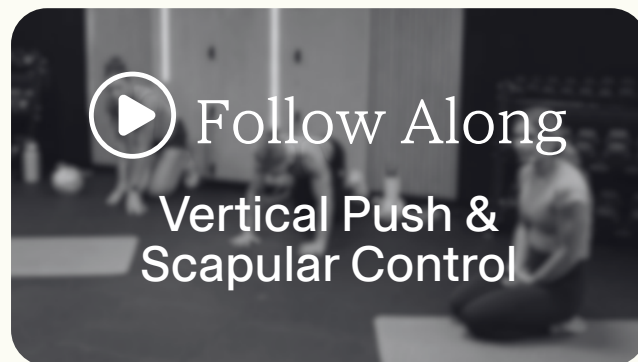


Step 3: Apply It to Your Movement

Finding 'The Stack' on the floor is step two. Making it part of how you actually move is what changes everything for good.

This means bringing your ribcage and pelvic floor connection into your squats, your hinges, your carries; every rep of every workout. When your system is stacked and coordinated, you stop leaking, your core starts working, and your symptoms start to resolve not because you're working harder, but because your body is finally working together.

Here's an example workout of the concepts of pressure and 'The Stack' in action in an upper body workout.



Ready to make this your everyday practice?

This guide gives you the foundation. But understanding the system and having a full program built around it are two different things.

Inside the Connect membership, every workout is designed around this exact approach ribcage position, breath coordination, pelvic floor connection, and progressive strength work that builds on all of it. This is what it looks like when the whole system works together, every single day.

This is how you stop managing symptoms and start actually fixing them.

Join the Connect Pelvic Floor Fitness membership and start your first workout today.

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Here's to living without limitations,



Carrie

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