



## The Five Key Benefits of Pilates

**Pilates exercises combine strengthening with good posture; they lighten the load on your spine and joints by correcting muscular imbalances due to bad alignment or misuse of muscles and alleviate tension. You'll restore good biomechanics, movement patterns and experience five key benefits.**

### 1. Alignment

Proper alignment (neutral spine) balances your skeleton so your muscles are held at their ideal length, without tension.

#### Key Benefits

- Improved posture - Good posture is very important to be able to use our body effectively without excess stress and strain.
- Injury prevention - for our limbs and spine to function effectively we need a strong balanced trunk. Pilates strengthens the body from the inside out with a focus on good body and limb alignment. Neutral, symmetrical spinal posture and correct muscle balance are essential in the prevention of overuse injuries resulting from sitting at a desk as well as injuries resulting from sport activities, running or gym training.

### 2. Strength

Pilates is a wonderful body-conditioning programme because you don't always need any equipment in order to strengthen your body. You can simply use your own body weight to create resistance for your muscles and to tone up.

Pilates strengthens the whole body, targeting each muscle group evenly with a mixture of dynamic and static strength training. No body part is neglected. You also work on all planes of movement - sitting, lying, standing. This means that the muscles are worked from many different directions, producing a uniform and very deep strength and tone, even without using heavy weights.

#### Key benefits

- Better exercise performance. Pilates is now used to improve the performance of elite athletes. In order that you achieve speed and power in your limbs - a good, strong balanced foundation to the limbs is required. Pilates focuses on strengthening and improving endurance in the limb attachments at the pelvis, shoulder girdle and the abdominals or 'core'.
- You are less likely to suffer from muscular and joint aches and pains, or to injure yourself, because your muscle balance and the way you carry yourself will improve.

### 3. Flexibility

We all want to achieve a strong body, but there must be a balance between strength and flexibility, and Pilates is the perfect exercise regime to achieve this. Tight muscles hinder your mobility and can lead to tension, aches, and pain. Flexibility is essential for your overall fitness and vitality. It ensures a greater range of movement in your joints, and will in turn mean your joints remain healthy and fare better against normal wear and tear as they age.

Pilates makes most use of dynamic, rather than static, stretching: this involves taking your body into and out of a stretch repeatedly and warms up the muscles so that they respond more effectively.

### Key benefits

- Your muscles are free from tension, and your movement is unrestricted, when you achieve good flexibility.
- Your posture will improve, because you will be able to hold your muscles correctly.
- Better blood circulation results from improved flexibility, because it helps the muscles to align more effectively. Improved circulation also gives you a boost of energy.
- Joints stay healthy as you age: they resist wear and tear better if they are flexible and move freely.

## 4. Shape and Tone

For a lot of us, our muscle tone while at rest may be quite weak. Muscles respond quickly to regular exercise, and after a few weeks of Pilates you should notice visible muscle tone and see your body begin to evolve. Pilates uses your body weight and the occasional prop as resistance for shaping your muscles, but it trains every part of your body evenly - front, back, and sides.

### Key benefits

- Develop more muscle definition through Pilates exercise - sculpt your waist and shoulders and tone your abdominals, arms, thighs, and your buttocks.
- Change your body shape completely with regular practice of Pilates. With work, you should see a beautifully toned and lengthened body emerge.

## 5. Endurance

Pilates exercises build endurance. The exercises should be challenging and can be graded to the individual. Pilates builds endurance within individual exercises and also within the class workouts. Initially in a Pilates class you may need to take breaks to perform a linked sequence of exercises. Your muscles will begin to tire after several repetitions, but over time, work towards completing a sequence without pausing and progressing the exercises to make keep you working hard. Our instructors will be able to advise you which level of class to which you will be most suited.

### Key benefits

- Pilates builds stamina.
- Immense strength and tone in the body is developed in Pilates by using your own body weight.
- Improved concentration results from focusing on completing each repetition, exercise, and sequence.



## So why the Pilates reformer . . . ?

To some, reformer equipment might resemble a torture apparatus, looking like a single bed frame but with a sliding carriage and adjustable springs to regulate tension and resistance. Cables, bars, straps and pulleys allow exercises to be done from a variety of positions, even standing.

The resistance created by the pulley and spring system can provide a more challenging (or less challenging if appropriate) strength and endurance workout than mat classes. It may also produce visible results sooner - arm, leg and abdominal muscles can look more firm and defined within a dozen or so regular sessions. The reformer's many attachments increase the range of modifications that can be made to the exercises, and allow additional exercises beyond what can be done on a mat. This capability, combined with the support afforded by the resistance the machine provides, allows people with limited range of movement or injuries to safely do modified exercises.

In summary it is a sophisticated piece of Pilates equipment that will help you and your Physiotherapist or trainer achieve your training or rehabilitation goals more quickly.

Before doing mat or reformer sessions it is recommended that you have a one to one assessment with an instructor. This is so you can get the most of out of our classes and you get a challenging work out tailored to you.

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