

Beyond the Core

Pilates is popularized as a great workout for your core—strengthening and toning your ‘powerhouse’ and improving posture. Its ab-flattening effects are now shown to be more effective than crunches.* But when it comes to choosing a full-body workout, Pilates shouldn't be relegated to the sidelines! Combined with a cardio component such as power walking, running, or Spinning, a good Pilates program can work muscles throughout the body to improve strength and flexibility and leave you toned and revitalized from top to toe.

Larger pieces of Pilates equipment, such as the Reformer or Chair, are ideal for performing exercises specifically for the arms and legs and are frequently used by trainers for athletic conditioning or to rehabilitate peripheral muscles. While some of this equipment is available only in Pilates studios, many clubs are beginning to offer group Reformer classes, making this unique and previously hard-to-find piece of equipment accessible to all gym goers.

Portable resistance tools, for example bands or Pilates circles, are economical options that can be incorporated into mat routines for maximum benefit to the limbs. You can substitute a Pilates workout with these props in

place of a free weight routine to sculpt a long, lean look. Even without accessories, exercises you may be doing in your Pilates mat classes will target muscles far beyond your core. Think of the plank or push-ups, requiring you to support your body weight on your arms; or leg kicks, engaging the hamstrings. A good class or video will ensure that you maximize the benefits of Pilates to achieve total body conditioning.

When putting your new fall fitness program together, don't just think of Pilates as something you do for your torso. Through its slow, controlled movements, and intense focus on the muscles you're using, Pilates will help coordinate mind and body to decrease stress and develop a well-functioning, great looking whole. ■

*Study conducted by Michele Olson, Auburn University, Alabama, 2005.

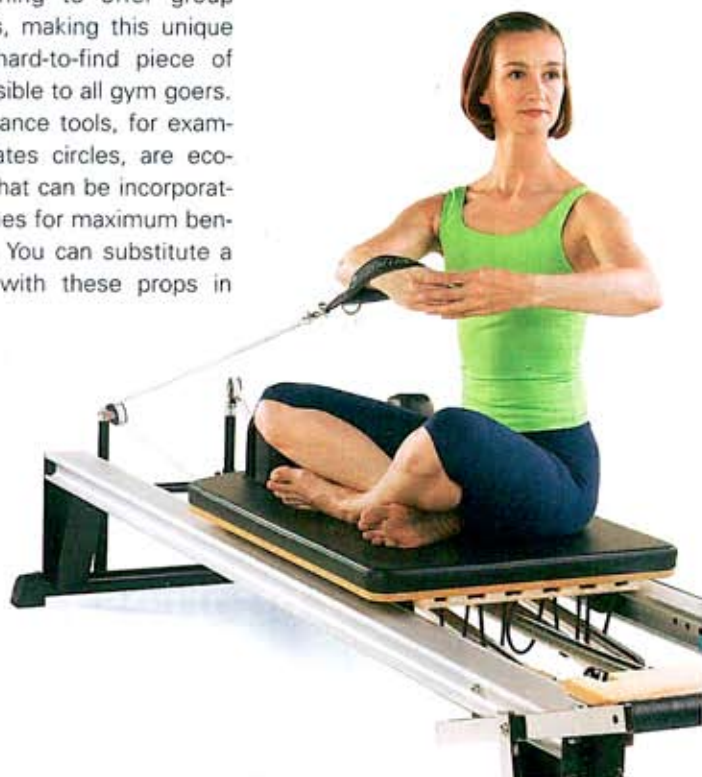


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