



pilates myths busted

1: Pilates burns fat: true or false? There are some Pilates programs that promote themselves as fat burning routines; however, science does not back up Pilates as being a form of exercise that specifically burns a lot of calories. Some form of aerobic exercise, such as running, swimming or walking, is recommended in conjunction with Pilates for an effective weight loss program that will slim and tone the entire body.

by Moira Merrithew Pilates benefits the body by strengthening, toning and building muscle mass. The increase in muscle tissue causes a corresponding increase in metabolic rate, which can aid with weight loss (along with cardio supplementation). Stronger, healthier muscles will also metabolize fat much more effectively than weak,

untrained muscles.

Plyometrics on the reformer (equipment used for Pilates), and cardio Pilates are becoming increasingly popular to boost caloric expenditure through Pilates exercises. There is also a trend of incorporating Pilates exercises into circuit training with aerobic exercises for fat burning and weight loss. (along with cardio supplementation).

2: Can Pilates provide a full-body workout?

Pilates is popularized as a great workout for your core: strengthening

alternatives

and toning your "powerhouse," improving posture and flattening abs. But when it comes to full-body workouts, Pilates shouldn't be relegated to the sidelines!

Pilates provides a balanced, full-body workout that will strengthen and tone muscles in the arms and legs. Try adding a resistance-circle device, or utilize Pilates equipment such as the reformer, or stability chair for maximum benefits to the limbs and peripheral muscles.

3: Does Pilates really lengthen your muscles?

Pilates doesn't necessarily lengthen all your muscles, but regular practice can give your muscles a longer, leaner appearance and a more slender look overall. To achieve this, it's important for beginners to have regular sessions and work with a qualified instructor.

Pilates helps achieve this longer, leaner look in three different ways:

- 1 The practice improves both the flexibility and strength of the muscles,
- 2 It helps create the optimal relationships between muscles, resulting in improved posture and a more balanced physique. Pilates helps correct the imbalance between muscles, creating changes in alignment and allowing you to stand taller.
- 3 By focusing on low resistance and on using various exercises to repeatedly work the muscle groups, Pilates tones muscles without bulking them up.

4: Can Pilates improve sports performance?

The global benefits of Pilates, such as enhanced body awareness, improved neuromuscular coordination and greater strength and flexibility, will improve sports performance no matter what your game. You can also practice Pilates conditioning for your favorite sport, to gain that extra edge and prep yourself for the season. Pilates training for golf, for example, will help you achieve a smoother, more efficient golf swing with greater range of motion, all while protecting against injury. Pilates benefits golfers through:

- Heightened breathing awareness, promoting focus and decreasing neck tension
- Enhanced stabilization of the spine during rotation, helping to prevent injury and promoting better biomechanics
- Added strength and flexibility of the hip joints, allowing easier load transfer and allowing greater rotation during your swing
- Increased symmetry of the body,

helping to avoid injury and promote efficiency

- Greater flexibility at the hip joints, allowing a more comfortable hinge forward
- Increased strength and flexibility of the shoulder, arms and wrists, achieving a more comfortable, pow-

erful swing

- Improved rotation and increased abdominal strength, allowing you to have a more powerful swing
- Improved neuromuscular coordination, connecting from the core to the periphery to create a more powerful swing

pilates for men

Nowadays Pilates is flourishing and men are slowly filtering into classes. The truth is, once guys experience the amazing changes Pilates can bring to their bodies – helping them feel stronger, fitter, leaner and more flexible; and suffering from less aches and pains – most become addicted.

by Leslee Bender & Dr. Rob Johnson, D.C. For men, it's not a matter of whether or not Pilates is right for them, but can you get them to try it? But in order to get them in the door, we need to make some changes.

1 Men can't dance ... or at least, are too embarrassed to try! Yet most classes are filled with complicated choreographed moves. If you are going to attract men to this form of exercise, you might need to rethink your routines.

2 Men are built differently than women! (Who knew!) If we are all built differently, how can you expect everyone to do the same exercises? It is important to remember that men are not built like women, nor do they move like them. Therefore, exercises for men need to be modified or changed, to fit their body types and needs.

Upper body modifications:

Most men are usually very tight in the upper body. They have more upper body mass, little flexibility, and their heads and shoulders usually round forward. They often have tight or overdeveloped pecs, and underdeveloped or neglected rhomboids and middle traps.

This tightness creates abnormal neck and shoulder motion which, if left uncorrected, leads to shoulder and neck pain. (See illustrations A & B)

By placing a towel under the

head, the neck and shoulders are supported and the exercises can be done correctly.

Lower body modifications:

Men typically have tight hamstrings and hip flexors. Consequently, when asked to lift their legs up into the air above their hips, they often develop pain and/or create a potentially dangerous stress on the lower back. Pilates is supposed to help people, not hurt them! Unfortunately, many traditional mat exercises routinely lift the legs up into the air. We have two solutions for this.

The first solution:

Use props! By placing the ball under the sacrum you decrease the stress on the low back, ensuring proper form, technique and safety.

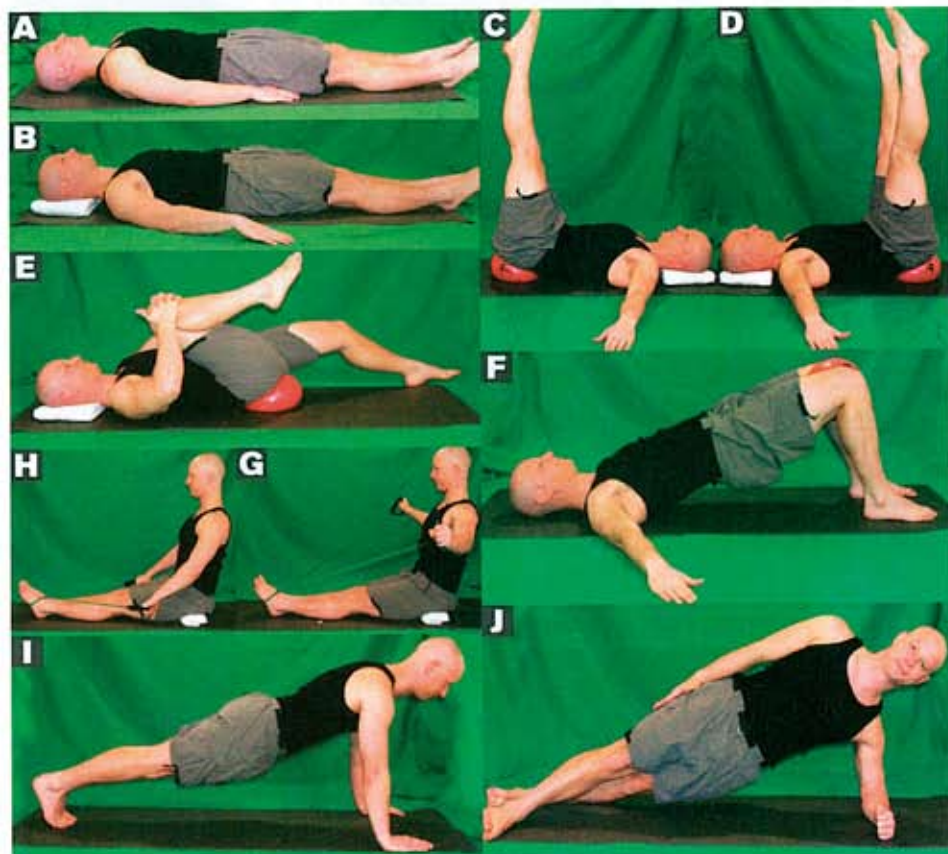
Try these exercises:

Corkscrew (See illustration C)

Place a mini-ball under your tailbone, then lift both legs up into the air. Holding the legs together, draw small circles on the ceiling. Pay close attention to maintaining and controlling your motion from deep within the core. Rotate each direction 10x; then reverse directions.

Leg circles (See illustration D)

After completing the corkscrew, separate the legs slightly and rotate the legs in opposite directions. Draw dinner-size plates on the ceiling with your feet. Again, generate all of the motion from deep within your core.



The second solution:

Stretch the iliopsoas (hip flexors) and strengthen the hamstrings. Men tend to have extremely tight hip flexors and overdeveloped quadriceps. Unfortunately, they also have tight and weak hamstrings. The combination of these conditions creates a tremendous amount of stress on the low back. By balancing out these muscle groups, you may be surprised how many men experience relief from low back pain.

Psoas stretch (See illustration E) Place the mini-ball under the sacrum and bring a single knee to the chest. Let the opposite leg drop towards the floor. Feel the stretch on the out-reaching leg.

Bridging (See illustration F) Start by peeling or curling your spine up from the bottom, slowly lifting each vertebrae up until you reach your shoulders. Make sure that you slightly bring your scapula together. The object of this exercise is to bring your body into a straight line. Don't jeopardize your spine by arching your back.

3 Men want to work their upper bodies. When a man attends a class, he wants to feel accomplishment. Let's face it: If you leave men alone in a gym, they will gravitate towards upper body workouts. Yet most Pilates routines

are almost entirely lower body exercises. If you want men to enjoy Pilates, you need to give them not only what they need, but also what they want.

Try this: add tubing to your routine! This will beef up the resistance and give them what they want.

Rhomboid squeeze (See illustration G) Start with your hands out to your sides, then extend, squeezing the rhomboids as you pull back.

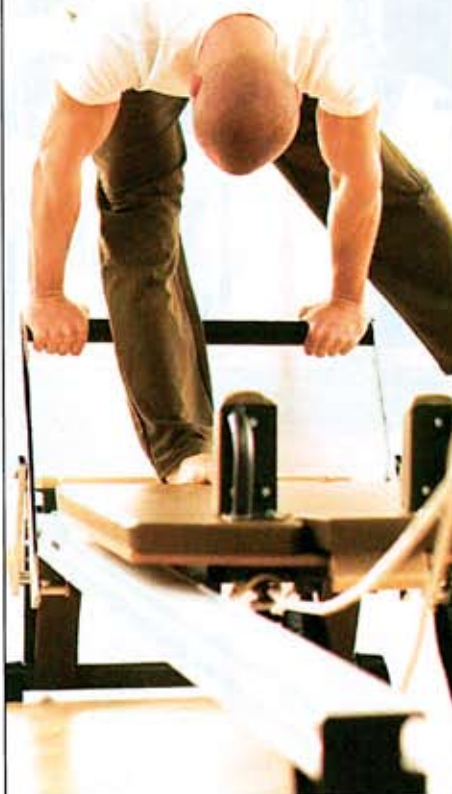
Triceps extension (See illustration H) Start with your hands out to your sides; pull the arms back, focusing on contracting your triceps.

Plank (See illustration I) Go into a pushup position, then hold it. Make sure your body is in a straight line, and do not allow your body to droop.

Side plank (See illustration J) From the plank position, drop and rotate to your side, again creating a straight line throughout your body.

And of course, don't forget the abs! Just make sure they are working these correctly. In other words, every movement in each exercise should funnel back to the core and spine. Always keep your students on "ab connection alert" for every routine.

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power in
performance.



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