

Understanding Pilates

It started in the 1950s on Muscle Beach, continued through the 1980s resplendent in legwarmers and dancey beats, and it's showing no signs of slowing down. Physical fitness is big business indeed, and while fitness trends have come and gone, one of the best exercise programs has held fast for over 80 years.

The Pilates Method, developed in the 1920s, has been the fitness regime of choice for Hollywood starlets, professional dancers and athletes for many years. Recently, Pilates has become available to "the rest of us".

It seems that everyone is jumping on the Pilates bandwagon; but rest assured, this is no passing trend. The Pilates Method has proven, lasting appeal, because it's much more than an exercise program. It is a complex program involving careful breathing, controlled movement, intense mental concentration, and yes, physical exercise. Pilates strengthens not only the body, but also the mind and spirit.

Understanding Pilates begins with putting aside the notions that a productive exercise program must also be an exhaustive cardiovascular workout. Although a physically challenging exercise, the Pilates Method will not leave you feeling exhausted or overly exerted. The Pilates Method and exercises were developed as a systematic practice, designed to boost your body's core through balance, stretching, strengthening and breathing. It's no wonder then that the Pilates Method is often recommended as a complementary addition to weightlifting and aerobic workouts.

How Does the Pilates Method Work?

The Pilates Method is a proven exercise program, because it combines essential breathing techniques with a series of concise stretches, as well as movements performed on specialized equipment. This combination of exercise and controlled movements focuses on enhancing the core of the human body by making it stronger and more flexible.

While sometimes compared to yoga, the Pilates Method is certainly more dynamic. Those performing Pilates exercises will push their bodies through a series of stretches, while targeting flexibility, strength and posture.

Those who understand Pilates will tell you that using the specialized equipment requires a series of systematic movements. In doing so, the torso must be held firmly in place, while the limbs move freely. It is performing these movements that an individual is challenged in areas of strength, balance and flexibility.

Benefits of Pilates

The benefits of performing the exercises of the Pilates Method are quickly and clearly noticeable. Many Pilates enthusiasts claim that after attending regular Pilates classes or sessions, their bodies become stronger, well-balanced and more toned. Pilates exercises make a difference in the abs, legs and back.

Weight loss is another benefit enjoyed by those who practice the Pilates Method. Many people claim to have increased energy levels, while others experience an overall sense of well-being.

Pilates is an extremely complex program that takes a lot of time to learn and perfect; but understanding Pilates is a little easier when you have a clear view of the countless benefits:

- * Helps to align the body
- * Strengthens abdominal muscles
- * Assists in the rehabilitation of injuries
- * Stretches, strengthens and tones the entire body
- * Safe and effective for pregnant women
- * A great choice for weight loss
- * Aids in overall well-being
- * Increases energy levels

Pilates is a very gentle, yet extremely effective method of achieving physical fitness. For this reason, it's well suited to people of all ages, and all fitness levels. Professional dancers, senior citizens, expectant mothers, serious athletes and those recovering from illness or injury can all reap the benefits of Pilates. Whether performed alone, or as a supplement to an aerobic routine or weightlifting regime, Pilates is a great choice for everyone.