PILATES FOR MENOPAUSE ON THE MAT™



by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 2

OVERVIEW 3

What is menopause caused by? 3
What are some of the symptoms of menopause and can they be interpreted another way? 4
What are the effects of menopause? 6
Why should menopausal women exercise? 9

BENEFITS OF PILATES FOR MENOPAUSE ... 10

THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF MENOPAUSE 11

What areas of the body are we most concerned about?

EXERCISE CONCEPTS 12

Arm Work 12
Upper Body Work 13
Hip work 15
Glut Work 16
Abdominals 17
Pelvic Floor Work 18

BREATHING AND RELAXATION 19

Supine breathing exercise sequence
Aligning the body through relaxation

MAT WORKOUT 23

Supine Series: Warm Up on the Mat 24
Supine Abdominal Series 30
Sitting Abdominal Series 36
Supine Arm Series 49
Side Lying Series 52
Side Lying Leg Series 55
Side Lying Abdominal Work 61
Prone Series 66
Prone Arm Series 69
Standing Series 85

INTRODUCTION

Menopause is an exciting and sometimes challenging time in a woman's life. A time of physical, emotional and spiritual change.

As movement specialists and/or clients, we can care for the menopausal body in ways that may help support these changes and some of the symptoms associated with it.

Over the last few years it has become apparent to me that menopausal women need a specific program that includes strength training (for bone health), cardiovascular workouts (for hormone balance and weight management), balance exercises and most importantly stretching and releasing, breathing and relaxation (for stress reduction, lymph drainage and resetting the para sympathetic nervous system). At this time most women should aim to remain active, toned and functional.

If you really want your body to continue to function well into your seventies and beyond, you have to start working smarter and this may be harder to do in the beginning as you learn to rethink your exercise program. Maybe you have lessened the resistance, lowered the heart rate and taken more breaks. Maybe you think you don't even need to exercise that much anymore? Maybe you think that at this age you should be slowing down and taking things easy?

WELL THINK AGAIN!

As women today, we are so much more active, informed and focused on our health and fitness than we were several decades ago. Most of us have been exercising for years and we are not about to stop now that we are reaching a certain age. Life does not stop at fifty anymore. I personally, have found that I am better now because I understand my body better, I am not trying to be someone else and I am looking to remain functional and healthy. We can apply the philosophy and principles of Pilates to our exercise programs whether they are fitness, yoga or any other sport. Menopause brings about changes of the mind; changes in the body and a reawakening of the soul or spirit. It can be a truly amazing time if we have the tools necessary to cope with these changes. Pilates is a wonderful aid in accomplishing these goals. Keeping a positive attitude and sense of humor is important too.

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OVERVIEW

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE CAUSED BY?

Menopause is said to be reached when a woman has not had a period for twelve months. However, the symptoms of menopause may be felt for at least ten years before periods stop. This can actually be anywhere between ages 35-55. There is no statistical data to support any actual age that it begins. It would seem to be purely an individual based process closely linked to genetics, environmental issues and whether a woman has had a complete or partial hysterectomy (known as medically induced menopause). Technically speaking a woman does not know she was in menopause until the end when she realizes she has not had a period in 12 consecutive months. By this time she is considered postmenopausal!

It is during this time that most women will experience the "symptoms" of menopause as seen below. During perimenopause and menopause, the ovaries, which produce female hormones such as estrogen and progesterone, begin to produce less and less of these hormones. The effects of this drop may bring about certain issues.

Estrogen is responsible for the development of:

- Breast tissue
- Body shape
- Body hair
- It is also said to protect bone mass

Thus the drop of estrogen may result in a decrease in breast tissue, skin elasticity and bone loss.
Contrary to popular belief there is also a loss (or shifting) of fat deposits in the female body at this time.

Progesterone balances out the hormone estrogen and once estrogen declines, progesterone levels will follow. Since progesterone has the tendency to retain fluid in the body, especially in the ligaments and other connective tissues, which enables our muscles, tendons and ligaments to remain flexible, you may find, with this decline, a decrease in the flexibility of the joints.

There may also be some joint pain as the cushioning effects of cartilage begin to lessen. Estrogen also has anti inflammatory effects that may also cause joint pain. This is sometimes mistaken for arthritis.

While estrogen and progesterone decline, please remember that we don't lose these hormones entirely. They have just declined. There may be an increase in the level of androgens, a male hormone. It is sometimes thought that this increase is responsible for middle aged spread and also the increase in facial hair. I say it is what has made me stronger physically!

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WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE AND CAN THEY BE INTERPRETED ANOTHER WAY?

- **HOT FLASHES - OR POWER SURGES**. This intense heat begins deep in the core of the body and radiates outwards. It has the ability to cause grown women to rapidly shed their clothes. Deep winter suits this woman best; standing naked knee deep in snow has the effect of lowering the body temperature to normal levels. Barring this drastic action, breathing through a hot flash, drinking less caffeine and alcohol (oh dear) and watching what you eat may also help.

- **SLEEP DISORDERS** such as insomnia, difficulty falling asleep, waking up frequently, or restless sleep, lead to fatigue. If you can't sleep, get up and do something productive. My feeling is that we don't need as much sleep as before and instead of fighting it, go with the flow. So much can be done in the wee hours of the morning with no interruptions. Have a nap during the day if necessary. Some will say that napping can disrupt your sleep cycle. I say when you feel tired, nap and let the rest of the day be more productive and enjoyable rather than dragging your way through it. Sometimes being overtired can disrupt your sleep as well.

- **MOOD SWINGS**, irritability, depression, anxiety, or nervousness indicate to me, unresolved issues. This is a time when a lot of women go inwards and reflect on their lives and try and decide what is best for them. Going back to school, starting a new career, and/or living alone are some of the life changing steps that have been taken by menopausal women. Take a good hard look at your life and decide whether to make the change for the better and get rid of some of these symptoms or stay in your comfort zone and suffer the consequences.

- **DECREASED LIBIDO**. My particular favourite. For the first time EVER women can enjoy sex without worrying about getting pregnant. Most menopausal women I have spoken to have seen an INCREASE in their sex lives. If you haven't, maybe you should change your partner? Just saying.

- **VAGINAL DRYNESS AND ATROPHY**. If you're not aroused, you're not aroused. Not your fault. If, however you are aroused and dry then there are some gels out there that may make your life easier. Try looking at your diet and lifestyle too.

- **MENSTRUAL CYCLE CHANGES** may include heavier periods, uterine fibroids, spotting between periods, or skipped cycles, as well as worsening PMS. Again this may be due to unresolved issues as well as poor diet and lack of exercise.

- **FUZZY THINKING, DECREASED OR IMPAIRED MEMORY AND ATTENTION**. This doesn't have to happen. Discipline and focus on the issues at hand are necessary. Life is changing, so must our way of thinking. If whatever you are doing doesn't interest you then maybe that is the cause of the attention deficit. Find something that arouses your passion. I can guarantee you won't have any fuzzy thinking then!

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- **INCREASED FOOD CRAVINGS AND STUBBORN WEIGHT GAIN**. Yes we all know about emotional eating. Let's eat mindfully and with the intention of nourishing not punishing our bodies. Our choice to make it a good one. Food cravings are all about trying to nourish a need not hunger.
- **DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS** such as irritable bowel, bloating, or acid reflux are all stress related. Calming down and breathing and focusing on what we really want will go a long way in alleviating some of these problems.
- **CARDIAC COMPLAINTS**, such as heart arrhythmia, chest pain, palpitations are also stress symptoms. A session of Pilates with breathing and relaxation as a focus will help.
- **JOINT AND MUSCLE SYMPTOMS**, including inflammation, stiffness or pain. This may be an effect of a drop in estrogen levels. Take a look at your workout and try to accommodate your new body. If running hurts, look for something with less impact. It is time to take charge of your own workout and determine what is right for YOUR body NOW. Not the body you had last year or when you were in high school.
- **DIZZINESS, DECREASED BALANCE, HEADACHES OR MENSTRUAL MIGRAINES**. Balance can be maintained with functional exercises. Tension in the body may also cause headaches. Breathing and relaxing may help these symptoms.
- **BREAST TENDERNESS, BREAST CYSTS, OR NIPPLE DISCHARGE**. See your health care provider about hormone imbalance. Look at your diet and exercise routines.
- **HAIR LOSS**; unwanted facial hair growth; dry eyes, skin, or hair; midlife acne. Eating nourishing food, exercising and dealing with your issues will go a long way in helping with these ailments.
- **PELVIC OR URINARY COMPLAINTS**, including urinary incontinence. Pelvic floor work will absolutely help with this. The pelvic floor is a sensitive issue with many women whatever stage of life they are in. Education on the function of this group of muscles may go a long way in helping women understand their bodies better. It is not a given that we should suffer ANY kind of deterioration of our bodies. WE must put in the work necessary to achieve and maintain wellness during these years.

Bottom line is that YOU are able to help yourself through this period. Listen to your heart, your soul and your feelings and try and take control over your own health. You know your body the best and the right education and information will help you on this journey.

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WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF MENOPAUSE?

THE BODY

Collagen is the main protein of connective tissue and is also responsible for skin strength and elasticity. As we age the ability to rebuild collagen is decreased. The fat layer under the skin starts to decrease and this may lead to wrinkles and sagging skin. It isn't just the skin though that is affected but also muscle tone. Exercise has been proven to have the ability to stimulate collagen regeneration in the muscles and bones. A double benefit for menopausal women with the beginnings of osteoporosis.

With the decrease of the hormone estrogen, bone density may become an issue. Weight bearing exercise has been proven to not only arrest osteoporosis but actually reverse it to some degree. Pilates is a safe and very beneficial system of movement for those who have this condition.

Estrogen has anti inflammatory properties and its decrease may allow swelling in the joints to occur. Sometimes this swelling is mistaken for arthritis. While some impact is beneficial for the bones and also for rebuilding collagen, it doesn't mean we have to beat ourselves to death running five miles every day. Some better ways to protect the joints if you want to do an aerobic activity is to swim, do step aerobics or use the jumpboard on the reformer.

Along with muscle and skin tonicity loss there may sometimes be weight gain. Usually this appears around the middle with a simultaneous loss of fat around the hips and thighs. This is a combination of hormonal fluctuations and the slowing down of the metabolism. It can also be a sign of stress. Many women become stressed about this journey rather than trying to go with the flow. Stress fat usually shows up around the middle. This is where exercise may not only help shift the hormonal balance by keeping blood sugar on an even keel but may help a woman feel better and stronger as her physical body changes for the better. There are plenty of solutions to the hormonal party just as there are to the slowing of the metabolism. Once again strenuous exercise has been shown to combat these symptoms.

We need to look closely at the type of exercise menopausal women need. If there is a problem with weight gain, there has to be a concerted effort to reduce the number of calories consumed as well as an increase in cardio vascular activity. There is no way around this formula. No amount of abdominal work is going to actually shift the weight in this area if there is no cardio activity and decrease in caloric input. Cardio activity needs to be for at least 20-30 minutes for the body to start burning its fat storage. A fast paced Pilates Mat class is probably not going to achieve this!

While most of us are into creating a stress free environment with gentle exercises and stretching, the truth is that we need to be worked out hard. We need to get OFF our backs and moving more, using more resistance and having a whole lot more FUN. Muscular movement is known to move lymph as well which will aid in helping us feel better as we rid ourselves of toxins and excess hormones.

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Pick up the pace of your mat classes. Use more springs on the reformers and Cadillacs and use more standing exercises. Invest in some type of cardio machine- bikes, ellipticals and treadmills and get on them for at least 20 minutes before class. Getting the heart rate up and sustaining it for at least 20 minutes will release the feel good hormones “endorphins” into the blood stream. It will also rev up the metabolism and keep it turned up for a while after the end of exercising.

Use a bell curve to plan your classes if you’re a teacher. Start off slow (with breathing and pre Pilates exercises) increase the level and intensity, sustain this level and then begin to cool down. This is an aerobic fitness formula but seems to work very well for the menopausal woman.

The jumpboard on the reformer is an excellent tool for this. So is jumping on a trampoline (or rebounder).It is also of a lower impact for those of you who really can’t cope with the higher impact stuff.

Use more resistance for arm work and preferably stand to do this. Arm work off the end of the Cadillac is good for this. If you have issues standing, sit on a stability ball for a challenge without the strain.

THE MIND

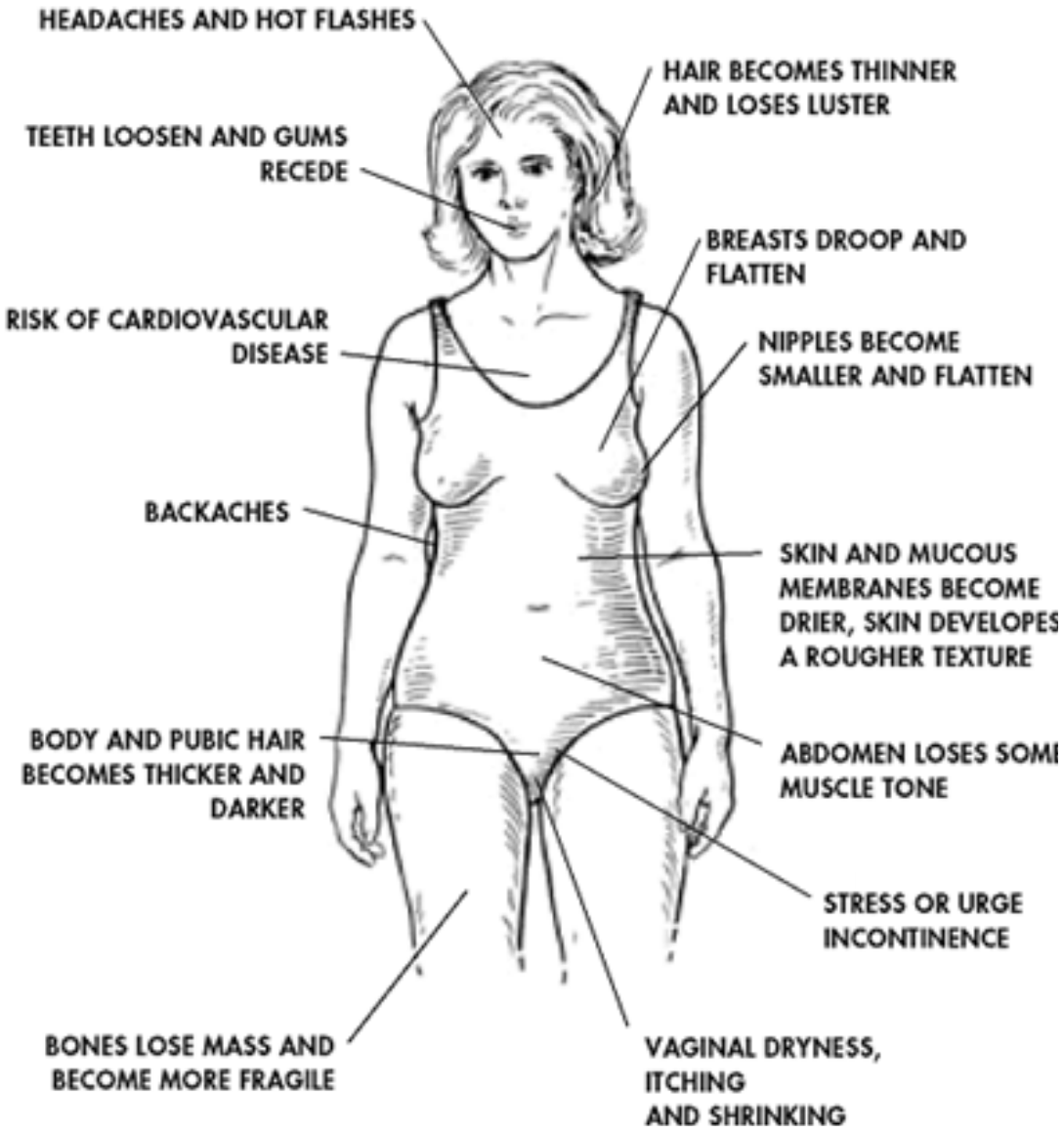
Women tend to experience mood swings, depression and irritability among several other symptoms during this time. Exercise is known to help alleviate these symptoms However, it has to be of a certain level before the benefits of releasing endorphins is felt. Having said that, simple exercises like breathing and stretching are also great stress blasters. Start your workout with a series of deep breaths to focus and calm the mind and end with more of the same to bring the body back into the center. Use stretches in between the exercises for rest periods as well as to stretch the muscles that are now working harder than before. This is NOT your mother’s Pilates class! Stretching increases flexibility which in turn helps with achieving balance and control over the body. Menopause can be a time of disorientation not just of the mind but of the body as well. Increasing balance exercises along with the stretches is a good idea. Trying to balance will help focus the mind. I have included some exercises that will challenge the brain as well as the body.Deep abdominal breathing not only calms and focuses the mind; it helps tone and strengthen the abdominal muscles as well. Sometimes extreme fatigue can be a problem and if so, a session of breathing and stretching along with some simple exercises may be just what the doctor ordered. It may help promote better sleep which is probably why they are fatigued in the first place. Breathing can also help you adjust to the changes that are taking place. It may help you look at this from a different perspective. Deep breathing allows you to go deeper onto your psyche where I believe, your answers lie.

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THE SPIRIT

This is a time of loss for most women. The loss of youth, vitality, the ability to bear children and the empty nest syndrome. They have to deal with a changing body, a befuddled mind and the mood swings. This is a lot to handle. Exercise will serve to make you feel better and in doing so you are better able to cope with the madness of menopause. This is also a time of self reflection, a reemergence of the self. Most of women report an opening of the mind and an insatiable desire to learn new things. At this stage of life most of us are strong and confident and are willing to do what it takes to achieve balance in our lives. Pilates seems to fit the bill for this very special time.

A SORRY SIGHT



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A sorry story indeed if we are to believe this picture. These are changes that are looked upon as horrific and irreversible. While some women may experience some of these symptoms some of the time, most women do not seem to have as many issues as the media would like to make out.

Nothing is irreversible including your physical fitness and shape.

WHY SHOULD MENOPAUSAL WOMEN EXERCISE ANYWAY?

Exercise has been shown to alleviate some of the symptoms that are experienced during this time.

- Bone density loss may be arrested and/or reversed by exercise
- Weight gain can be controlled with exercise
- Fatigue and lethargy can be helped with exercise
- Strength and balance may be maintained through exercise.
- Mood can be lifted through the release of endorphins during exercise.

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PILATES FOR MENOPAUSE?

If we look at the principles of Pilates, we will see how beneficial this exercise system is for women going through menopause.

PILATES MENOPAUSE PRINCIPLES™

BREATHING

Breathing reduces stress and helps calm and focus your client. Some women may experience anxiety attacks during this time and deep breathing may help with this condition. Breathing may also help with the ability to get a good night's sleep as insomnia is sometimes a problem. The pumping action of the diaphragm will also serve to pump the lymph system, clearing toxins quicker from the body and helping with the slowing down of the aging body.

STRENGTH

Resistance training is essential for the menopausal client. As estrogen declines there is a corresponding decline in bone density. Resistance training may help arrest and even reverse some of these effects.

FLEXIBILITY

Maintaining flexibility is important in maintaining balance

ENDURANCE

Pilates develops the ability to cope and endure this phase of life. Preferably with humor.

COORDINATION

Due to hormonal imbalance, some women become not just mentally uncoordinated but physically as well. Pilates provides an opportunity to focus the mind and gain control over the body.

TOTAL BODY INTEGRATION

This will help maintain function, balance and control over the changing body

RELAXATION

Definitely needed! Coordinated with the breath, this becomes an aid to sleeping better, focusing better and coping better.

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THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF MENOPAUSE

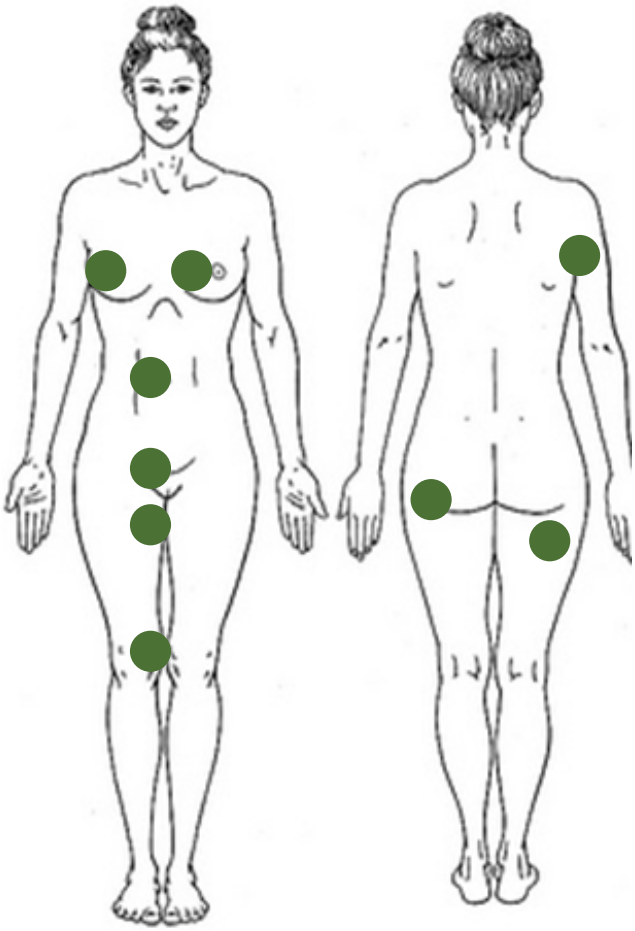
So now that you have an idea of what it is, what its effects are on the body and what we can do to help, let's look at this from an exercise point of view. Exercise will increase bone density, muscular strength and balance. All very necessary elements of a menopause exercise session.

WHAT AREAS OF THE BODY ARE WE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT?

The female body is different from the male body (yes!) and needs a different way of exercising especially at this stage of life. Female bodies have fat deposits in specific places and as we age these fat deposits start to diminish. What we're left behind with is sagging skin. What we need to do is build up the muscle. For this reason, the menopausal workout has to be not just more intense but smarter in its implementation.

This fat distribution is generally as follows

- The breasts
- The upper arms- the triceps area.
- Around the navel
- Between the thighs
- The buttocks
- The outer thighs
- Around the vagina
- Inside of the knees



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EXERCISE CONCEPTS

Apart from the breast area-(a good supportive bra is a necessity) we can hopefully try to increase the bulk and tone of the underlying muscles. If a woman is overweight, building up the muscle without a subsequent decrease in her fat reserves will only make her look bigger. For fat reduction to take place there has to be some cardiovascular type exercise and a decrease in calories taken in.

ARM WORK

Ask any menopausal woman and she will tell you about her “bat wings” also known as the triceps. I prefer to look at these as my angel wings starting to grow back in.

Arm work is essential. Will building the muscle take away the sagging skin? No unfortunately it doesn’t. (I have tried valiantly!) But you will gain strength physically and this will translate into feeling more confident about your body. I do find though that the older we get, the harder it is to do any kind of over head arm work. This may lead to other issues that I see more and more of, such as frozen shoulder and rotator cuff issues.

In an effort to lose the sag, many women think loading up on the weights is what will do the trick. The fitness formula of light weights to tone and heavy weights to build muscle works well here. More repetitions with light weights will keep injuries to a minimum and muscles looking good. If you do add springs for arm work, watch for signs of muscle fatigue and build the resistance slowly. For muscle build up and more strength we can increase the number of springs on the reformer or have heavier springs on the Cadillac. Introduce weights or resistance bands into a mat class.



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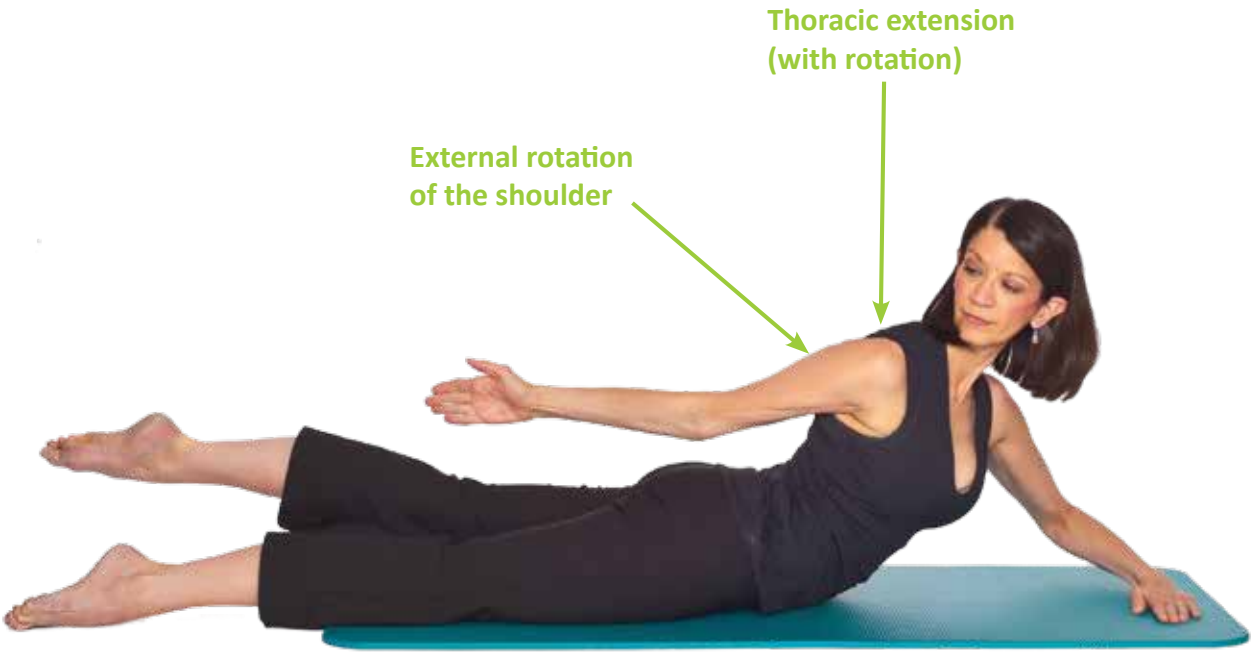
UPPER BODY WORK

Over head arm work may also build tension rather than strength if not done properly and this in turn may create some postural challenges around the neck and shoulder area. There is a tendency towards kyphosis and sometimes the appearance of a dowagers hump during menopause, though sometimes this could be a reflection of fatigue and tension rather than weak muscles. It may also be due to incorrect placement of the shoulders when attempting to perform resistance work with the arms.

External rotation and thoracic extension are important aspects of upper body conditioning.

In doing back extension we need to include articulation as well as what I call “neutral” lifting of the thoracic spine. The focus for arm and back work is lower below the shoulder line than up in the neck area. Pulling the shoulder blades down and getting into the latissimus dorsi and lower traps, triceps and shoulder adductors and rhomboids rather than the upper and middle trapezius works well.

Rotation of the torso is also an important aspect of conditioning in this population. The sides and back body generally become weaker as the muscles lose some tone with the aging process. Many exercise routines; Pilates included, work more from the front body. This program includes work that incorporates more internal, external obliques and the QL and Psoas muscles as these are important stabilizing muscles of the pelvic area as well as back extension work.



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With this age group too come the concerns of osteoporosis and the contraindication of flexion of the torso. For this reason I have included some flexion of the torso exercises from an extension range of motion. This becomes more functional for the client as she will then use the muscles that will help her stand up straighter, rather than creating more of that forward flexion posture.

Thoracic Extension



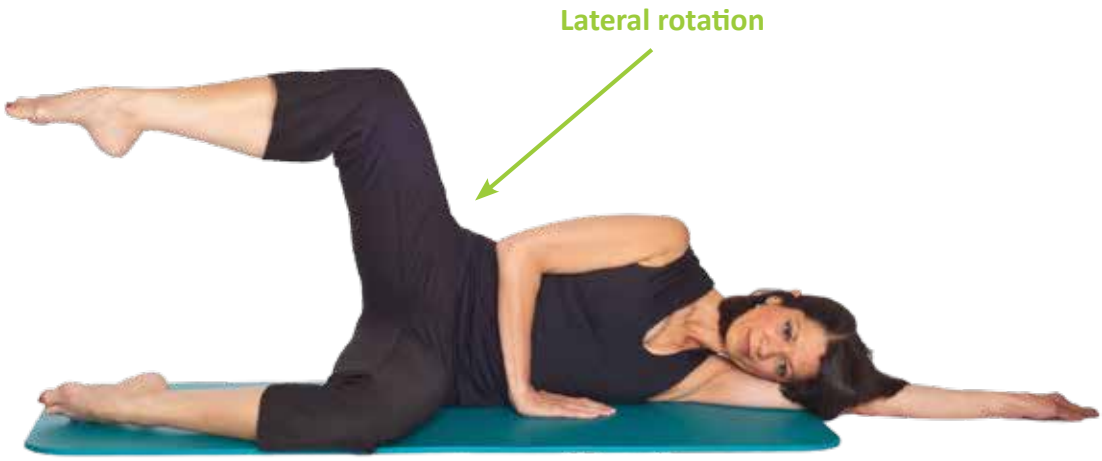
Thoracic Flexion

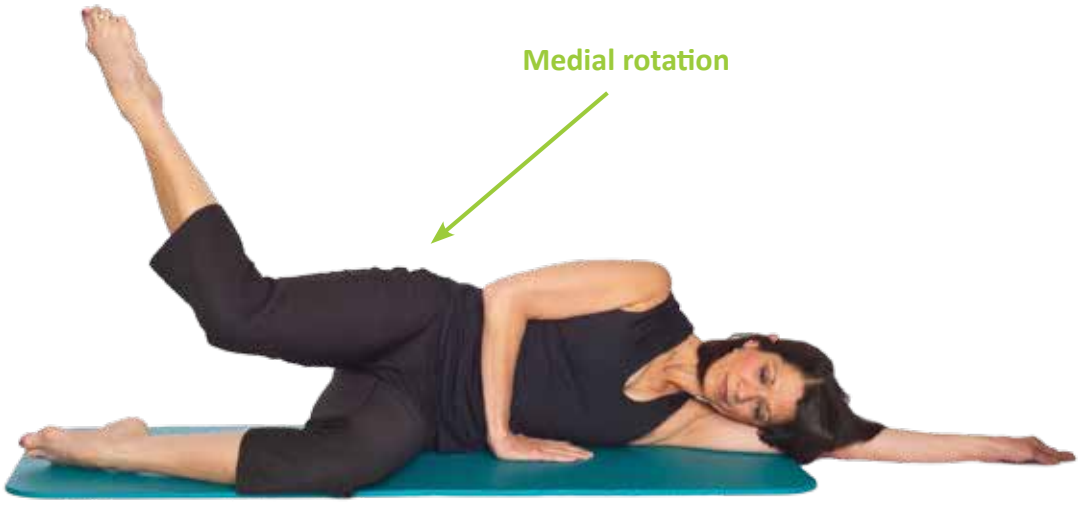


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HIP WORK

This area tends to lose strength and stability and keeping this area functional will help prevent issues with balance.
We have all done the hip adductor/ abductor work but now we will take it one step further. We will increase then range of motion and include moving through all planes as well as standing exercises as much as possible.





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Balance



Bringing most of the exercises out of a supine position greatly improves the functioning of the body. Standing will also engage the pelvic floor much more.

GLUT WORK

The gluteus maximus gets its shape not just from the muscle but also from the fat layer beneath it. As a woman begins to age, she loses this natural fat deposit. The skin surrounding this muscle begins to droop. The gluteus maximus does not necessarily work hard in our day to day activities. It becomes activated only when there is extra work to be done as in climbing stairs or coming out of a knee bend. So this muscle really needs some extra work during a Pilates session. This is not just an aesthetic point of view but also for balance and maintaining strength.

Glut work done in many different positions



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ABDOMINALS

This area starts to lose tone and with any weight gain can begin to look unsightly. With the older woman, our concern is with osteoporosis and the contraindication of flexion of the torso. Most Pilates exercises include this and so we have to try and perform abdominal work that will activate more stabilization rather than flexion.

We have included some abdominal work that takes the range of motion from extension to neutral rather than into flexion. This also seems to have a better effect on the menopausal posture than the traditional flexion.

We have also upped the intensity for our other abdominal work.



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PELVIC FLOOR WORK

Most Pilates routines on the mat and equipment are done in a supine position. While this is a good position to be in for the most part, it does not load the pelvic floor. Standing positions or positions that take you from a sitting to kneeling or standing position are functional and load the pelvic floor.



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BREATHING & RELAXATION

Before every workout it is always a good idea to calm the body and mind in order to reap the best benefits from the exercise. Muscles cannot work optimally when they are tense. A relaxed muscle will enable you to work “deeper” and will have more capacity for strengthening.

This is one of the most important aspects of any exercise program. We can use the breath for the following:

- Creating focus.
- Creating relaxation.
- Activating the pelvic floor and abdominals.
- Establishing individual body alignment.

Learning to breathe deeply will reset the body reactors. It will change the over worked sympathetic “flight or fight” system to the parasympathetic “rest and relax” system. Breathing also acts as a “pump” for the lymph system which, on its own, does not have the ability to move waste out of the body relying on movement and breathing to help.

Deep abdominal breathing is such a great stress reducer as well as focusing the mind and calming the nerves. It is wonderful to see the energy change in a class when everyone begins to breathe deeply. It creates such a calm, serene atmosphere and is truly beneficial for those who have run into class after a hectic day.

The muscles and bones involved with breathing include the lungs, the diaphragm, the transversus abdominus, the posterior serratus and the intercostals (the muscles between the ribs). These muscles have attachments to the ribcage which protects the heart and lungs.

During inhalation the diaphragm contracts and pulls downward. This is mirrored by the pelvic floor diaphragm and the palate diaphragm in the roof of the mouth. It is this mirroring that allows us to stretch and release the pelvic floor muscles on an inhale.

The (breathing) diaphragm relaxes back to its original position on an exhalation. There is a moment between an inhale and exhale where no movement of the diaphragm takes place. This is a rest space. This is the space where relaxation occurs.

The pelvic diaphragm (floor) will also return to normal. If we are to strengthen the pelvic floor, the connection should be made at the end of the exhale when all muscles are back to their resting position. This will create a gentler pull on the PF muscles rather than an aggressive, sometimes violent contraction which does little to work the muscles according to their function.

The ribcage will expand sideways and forward on the inhale and return to normal on the exhalation unless there is a forced exhalation, in which case, the lower ribs will be pulled together, engaging the transversus abdominus and posterior serratus muscles. This is a wonderful way to activate the transversus abdominus.

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SUPINE BREATHING EXERCISE SEQUENCE

Benefits

The supine position eliminates the need to activate the surrounding muscles.
Activates the pelvic floor muscles.



- Lie supine with the knees bent, feet hip width apart and place the finger tips on the sit bones.
- Inhale into the finger tips using verbal cuing to indicate the breath flowing through the pelvic floor. “Breathe in between your sit bones”
- Exhale and initiate the out breath by visualizing the sit bones coming together. “Exhale and gently bring the sit bones together”
- Repeat desired number of times



Then add

- Place the finger tips on the hip bones.
- Inhale in between the hip bones.”Breathe in between the hip bones”
- Exhale and visualize the hip bones narrowing. “Exhale and gently bring the hip bones together”
- Repeat desired number of times.

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Then add

- Place the hands on the lower ribcage
- Inhale into the hands, expanding the ribcage, “Inhale between the hands”
- Exhale and pull the lower ribcage together. “Exhale and gently bring the ribcage together”
- Repeat desired number of times



Then add

- Place the hands on the posterior ribcage.
- Inhale into the hands
- Exhale and allow the ribcage to relax towards the mat OR exhale and gently bring the front of the ribcage together, keeping the back wide.
- Repeat desired number of times



Then put it all together

- Place the hands on the abdominals.
- Inhale into the abdominals.
- Exhale and allow the abdominals to relax towards the spine.
- At the end of the exhale, gently pull the abdominals towards the spine to create the “flatness” of the abdominals.
- Then connect the sit bones, hip bones and ribcage,
- The cue becomes, “inhale, exhale, drop, connect and (do a movement)”
- Repeat desired number of times

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ALIGNING THE BODY THROUGH RELAXATION

We achieve a relaxed state of alignment through breathing and releasing techniques at the beginning of every session.

Relaxing the muscles loosens their hold on the bones and this may allow the bones to realign according to the individual body. There is no “perfect” alignment; every “body” is different.

Cuing alignment

After using the breath to create relaxation in the body begin using these cues for alignment.

- In a supine position, as the body begins to relax, begin to “feel” the back of the head on the mat. This will position the head correctly.
- Then breathe and loosen the neck. The release of tension may adjust the alignment of the neck.
- Working down the body, “feel” both shoulder blades on the mat.
- Keep breathing and releasing in between to ensure the body is releasing.
- Work your way down the body- release the back of the ribcage towards the mat. Don’t force alignment.
- “Feel” the back of the pelvis on the mat and then “feel” the soles of the feet on the mat.

Allow time to relax into this alignment.

Nine times out of ten, you will find that you have perfectly good alignment. From this point, the session should maintain a sense of relaxation to ensure that the muscles are not working with tension. This will help keep the body in a good alignment.



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MAT WORKOUT

In designing a mat class for this population here are some things to think about:

- The mat offers the opportunity for breathing, relaxation and a true “flow” to the class. Build a good warm up, one that uses lots of breathing and releasing before beginning the class. This will help decrease any tension and allow for better strengthening of the muscles.
- Slowly pick up the pace of the program. Start slowly, making sure that tight muscles are beginning to release and minds are beginning to focus.
- Perform basic level exercises in all positions, supine, side lying and prone and then repeat the cycle again with intermediate level exercises and if time allows do some advanced exercises. This way, those clients who are unable to do more advanced work can still stay at the basic level. If possible allow time at the end of the session for more breathing and relaxation.

I have chosen the Pilates Arc™ from Balanced Body as my main prop is designing this mat program for menopausal women. The stability ball is also a good alternative though less stable. I have used light weights between 2-5 lbs for some of the exercises.

In reviewing the concepts of this course, we will see that using a prop like the Pilates Arc™ offers the client the ability to use more range of movement for the entire body especially in the thoracic spine area. Working from extension into neutral is more functional for someone with kyphosis rather than working too much into flexion.

Sidelying on the Pilates Arc™ offers a deeper range of movement for the abductor group, as the client is lifted off the floor. This range is also more functional than performing side lying on the mat.

Back extension also works from a more functional range of motion, mimicking everyday life working from flexion into extension rather than extension into “hyper” extension.

Building some standing exercises into the program enables the client to find balance and stability.

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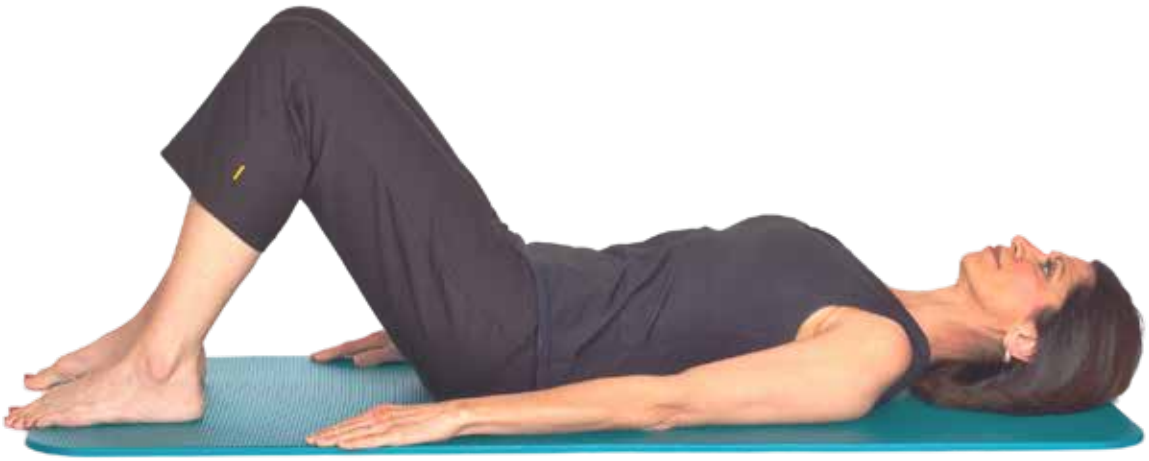
Supine Series:
Warm Up on the Mat

BREATHING AND RELEASING

Benefits

Releases tension in the body, allowing the muscles to relax and the bones to drop into place.

- Lie supine on the mat with the arms by your sides.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and begin to release the tension in the body.
- Keep breathing deeply and relax the body with the alignment cues learnt earlier.



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BRIDGING

Benefits

Strengthens and releases the pelvic floor.
Creates mobility in the spine.

- Lie supine on the mat with the arms by your sides.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and bring the tailbone to pubic bone, pubic bone to chest.
- Begin to lift the pelvis off the floor and bring the sit bones together.
- Squeeze the gluts and continue rolling up the spine bringing the hip bones and then bottom of the rib cage together.
- Inhale at the top.
- Exhale and begin to roll back down the spine starting from the back of the throat, through the back of the ribcage, into the lumbar spine and finally releasing the pelvis towards the tailbone on the inhale.





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THORACIC STRETCH

Benefits

Releases the tension in the thoracic spine.

- Lie supine on the mat with the arms by your sides.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and bring the tailbone to pubic bone, pubic bone to chest.
- Begin to lift the pelvis off the floor and bring the sit bones together.
- Squeeze the gluts and continue rolling up the spine bringing the hip bones and then bottom of the rib cage together.
- Inhale to bring the arms over the chest.
- Exhale to lower the arms over the head as you slowly roll down the spine.
- Inhale to bring the arms back over the chest, exhale to roll back up the spine to repeat.









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HAMSTRING STRETCH

- Lie supine on the mat with the arms by your sides.
- Lengthen one leg towards the ceiling.
- Inhale to point the foot.
- Exhale to flex the foot.
- Repeat several times.
- Continue with ankle circles in both directions.
- Continue with leg circles in both directions.
- Repeat with the other leg.



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GLUT SQUEEZE

Benefits

Releases the tension in the thoracic spine.

- Lie supine on the mat with the arms by your sides.
- Inhale to lengthen one leg towards the ceiling.
- Exhale and press the pelvis up while pressing the lifted leg down.
- Inhale to release the pelvis and leg.
- Repeat.







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THORACIC ROCK

- Lie supine with knees bent and feet on the mat.
- Place both hands behind the neck.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and roll up the spine into a bridge position.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and raise the head and neck off the mat, dropping the pelvis towards the mat.
- Inhale to press the pelvis upwards and drop the head and neck towards the mat.
- Maintain the curve in the thoracic spine.
- Repeat.

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Supine Abdominal Series

CHEST LIFT

Benefits

Strengthens the rectus abdominus.

- Lie supine with knees bent and feet on the mat.
- Place both hands behind the neck.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the head, neck and maybe the shoulders off the mat.
- Inhale to lower half way down.
- Exhale to lift.
- Repeat.







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TORSO ROTATION

Benefits

Strengthens the internal and external obliques.

- Lie supine with knees bent and feet on the mat.
- Place both hands behind the neck.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the head, neck and maybe the shoulders off the mat.
- Release one hand and raise it over the chest.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and reach the ribcage towards the opposite knee.
- Inhale to lower half way down.
- Exhale to lift.
- Repeat on the other side.

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RIB CAGE CIRCLES

Benefits

Engages all the abdominal muscles.

- Lie supine with knees bent and feet on the mat.
- Place both hands behind the neck.
- Inhale and take the spine into lateral flexion.
- Exhale and circle the ribcage into flexion of the torso.







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- Inhale into lateral flexion on the other side and circle the ribcage back to the mat.
- Repeat.
- Repeat in the opposite direction.







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ROLL UP INTO CLIMB A TREE

Benefits

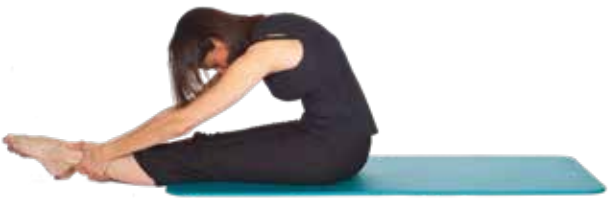
Strengthens the abdominals.
Stretches the hamstrings.

- Lie supine on the mat with both legs straight and arms overhead.
- Inhale to bring the arms over the chest.
- Exhale to roll up the spine. Reach for one ankle.
- Inhale and lift the leg off the floor, and begin to lower the spine.











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- When the extended leg is stretched to its fullest, exhale and begin to climb down the leg.
- Lower all the way to the mat, holding onto the bottom of the thigh.
- Inhale at the bottom.
- Exhale and climb back up the “tree”.
- Repeat several times before lowering the leg back to long sit to pick up the other leg to repeat the exercise.





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Sitting Abdominal Series

ABDOMINAL ROLL DOWN INTO ROTATION ON THE MAT

Benefits

Activates the pelvic floor and lower TA and obliques.

- Sit on the mat with knees bent and feet on the mat.
- Extend the arms forward at chest level.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and gently pull the tailbone to the pubic bone, pubic bone to chest and rock the pelvis backwards. Continue to roll down the spine until a comfortable position is obtained.
- Inhale to hold.
- Exhale and begin to rotate the torso.
- Inhale and extend the arm to the side increasing the rotation of the torso.









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- Exhale to bring the arm back.
- Inhale to rotate the torso back to center.
- Exhale to repeat to the other side.



ADD ON...

- In the roll down position, continue to lower the body.
- Inhale, exhale and lower the spine one vertebra.
- Inhale, exhale and lower the spine one vertebra until lying supine on the mat.









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ABDOMINAL ROLL DOWN INTO THORACIC EXTENSION ON THE PILATES ARC™

Benefits

Warms up the spine and activates the abdominals.
Stretches the thoracic spine and opens the chest.

- Begin by sitting in the well of the Pilates Arc™ with both feet on the floor and both arms extended forward.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and begin to roll down the spine, connecting the sit bones, hip bones and ribcage as you progress.







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- Lengthen the thoracic spine over the Pilates Arc™ and stretch the arms overhead.
- At the end of the movement, inhale and circle the arms around to the side stretching and opening the chest.
- Exhale and begin to roll back up the spine to end sitting in the well.

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SINGLE LEG ROLL DOWN

Benefits

Creates an environment for ascertaining balance of the pelvis, hamstrings, gluts and abdominal muscles.

- Start by sitting in the well of the Pilates Arc™ with one foot on the floor and the other leg lifted. Arms are extended forward.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and begin to roll down the spine, noting any imbalances in the body and adjusting accordingly.
- When the shoulders are resting on the Pilates Arc™, begin to lift the pelvis off the Pilates Arc™, pressing the foot into the floor to help.









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- Inhale and continue rolling through the spine, extending the leg to the ceiling.
- The pelvis is lifted off the Pilates Arc™ and the shoulders are resting on the Pilates Arc™. Make sure both sides of the gluteus maximus are working evenly.
- Circle the arms around at the end of the movement opening and stretching the chest.
- Exhale and begin to roll back up the spine keeping the leg extended to the ceiling and the pelvis lifted.

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- Inhale and lower the pelvis back into the well and reach the arms up towards the foot.
- Exhale to continue rolling up the spine keeping the abdominals connected and the foot lifted.



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REACH

Benefits

Stretches the whole body especially the front body.

- Begin by sitting in the well of the Pilates Arc™ with both feet on the floor and both arms extended forward.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and begin to roll down the spine, connecting the sit bones, hip bones and ribcage as you progress.
- Once the shoulders have reached the Pilates Arc™ begin to lift the pelvis activating the gluts.

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- Lengthen the whole body over the Pilates Arc™, reaching the legs away from the arms.
- Inhale to circle the arms around and begin to roll back up the spine.
- Carefully drop the pelvis back into the well and recover to the starting position.











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DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

Benefits

Strengthens the abdominals and Psoas with support.

- Sit in the well of the Pilates Arc™ with both knees bent.
- Arms are extended towards the feet.
- Inhale and stretch both arms overhead as you lengthen both legs.
- Exhale to pull the knees towards the chest and bring the arms forward.
- Repeat.

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With Rotation

- Sit in the well of the Pilates Arc™ with both knees bent.
- Arms are extended towards the feet.
- Inhale and stretch both arms overhead as you lengthen both legs.
- Exhale and rotate the torso towards the opposite knee.
- Inhale and stretch both arms overhead as you lengthen both legs.
- Exhale to the other side.









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CHEST LIFT

Benefits

By doing chest lifts over the Pilates Arc™, you strengthen the abdominals in a more functional way. Many menopausal women tend towards kyphosis and this exercise helps extend the spine.

- Lie backwards over the Pilates Arc™ with both hands supporting the head.
- Feet are flat on the floor.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and flex the torso only to a neutral position.
- Inhale to lower.





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CHEST LIFT WITH WEIGHTS

Any time you can add weights to your program, please do so.

Benefits

Strengthens the serratus anterior, obliques and rectus abdominus.

- Lie backwards over the Pilates Arc™ with arms stretched overhead holding weights.
- Inhale to bring the arms over the chest first.
- Exhale and flex the torso.
- As a variation, exhale and rotate the torso to the opposite knee.









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Supine Arm Series

Benefits

Keeping the client in thoracic extension while doing arm work is one way in which to keep discomfort from kyphosis to a minimum. Using light to moderate weights adds weight bearing to the exercise.

CHEST PRESSES



- Lie supine over the Pilates Arc™.
- Slide backwards until the pelvis is supported by the curve of the Pilates Arc™.
- The head is lengthened towards the floor. If necessary place a support under the head.
- Using weights, extend the arms over the chest
- Inhale to lower the arms out to the side.
- Exhale to return the arms.



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TRICEPS

- Lie supine over the Pilates Arc™.
- Slide backwards until the pelvis is supported by the curve of the Pilates Arc™.
- The head is lengthened towards the floor. If necessary place a support under the head.
- Bend the elbows at shoulder level.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and extend the elbows towards the ceiling.



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ARM CIRCLES

- Lie supine over the Pilates Arc™.
- Slide backwards until the pelvis is supported by the curve of the Pilates Arc™.
- The head is lengthened towards the floor. If necessary place a support under the head.
- Lift both arms over the chest.
- Inhale and circle the arms out to the side.
- Exhale and bring the arms back over the chest.
- Repeat in the opposite direction.

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Side Lying Series

SIDELYING ARMS

Benefits

External and internal rotation of the shoulder is an important part of menopause arm work. This area begins to atrophy through lack of use caused by injuries and pain. Keeping the joint moving functionally can help eliminate some of these problems.



- Lie sideways in the well of the Pilates Arc™, with the underneath leg bent and the top leg lengthened.
- Support the head with the underneath arm.
- Using a light weight (3lbs or less) bend the elbow into the side.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the weight towards the ceiling, externally rotating at the shoulder.
- Inhale to lower and internally rotate at the shoulder.



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SHOULDER ABDUCTION

- Lie sideways in the well of the Pilates Arc™, with the underneath leg bent and the top leg lengthened.
- Support the head with the underneath arm.
- Using a light weight (3lbs or less) bend the elbow into the side.
- Lengthen the arm towards the hip.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the arm towards the ceiling.
- Inhale to lower.





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LAT PULL DOWN

- Lie sideways in the well of the Pilates Arc™, with the underneath leg bent and the top leg lengthened.
- Support the head with the underneath arm.
- Using a light weight (3lbs or less) bend the elbow into the side.
- Bend the elbow over the head.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and pull the elbow towards the hip.
- Inhale to return.
- Repeat.





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Side Lying Leg Series









This is an important part of the menopause workout. The hips need to be kept strong and flexible to help maintain balance and posture. Doing hip work in all directions- parallel, lateral and medial rotation is essential.

Doing hip work on the Pilates Arc™ enables greater range of motion which in turn becomes more functional than doing it from the floor.

HIP ABDUCTION ON THE MAT

Benefits

Strengthens the hip abductor muscle group.

When performed in lateral and medial rotation, it will also target the hip rotators and subsequently the PF.

- Lie sideways on the Mat. Extend the underneath arm and both legs.
- Inhale to lift the top leg.
- Exhale to lower.
- Repeat.
- Repeat in lateral and medial rotation.

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DOUBLE LEG LIFTS

Benefits

Strengthens both hip abductors and adductors.

Strengthens the obliques.

- Lie sideways on the Mat. Extend the underneath arm and both legs.
- Inhale to prepare.
- Exhale and lift both legs off the mat. Think about pressing up with the underneath leg.
- Inhale to lower.
- Exhale to lift.





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HIP ADDUCTION

Benefits

Strengthens the hip adductors and obliques.

- Lie sideways on the Mat. Extend the underneath arm and both legs.
- Inhale to lift the top leg.
- Exhale and lift the underneath leg to meet the top leg.
- Inhale to lower the underneath leg.
- Exhale to repeat.

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BANANA

Benefits

Strengthens the side body.

- Lie sideways on the Mat. Extend the underneath arm and both legs.
- Inhale to prepare.
- Exhale to lift both legs and head, neck and shoulder off the mat.
- Inhale to lower.
- Repeat.





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HIP ABDUCTION ON THE PILATES ARC™

Benefits

Using the Pilates Arc™ creates a greater range of motion for hip abduction.

- Lie sideways in the well of the Pilates Arc™, with the underneath leg bent and the top leg lengthened in parallel.
- Support the head on the Pilates Arc™ with the underneath arm.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the top leg to hip level.
- Inhale to lower.
- Repeat in both medial and lateral rotation.





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HIP FLEXION AND EXTENSION WITH ABDUCTION – SIDE KICKS

- Lie sideways in the well of the Pilates Arc™, with the underneath leg bent and the top leg lengthened, foot flexed.
- Support the head with the underneath arm.
- Place the other hand on the Pilates Arc™ for support.
- Inhale and flex at the hip to bring the leg forward.
- Exhale and lower the extended leg towards the floor.
- Inhale to lift the leg back to hip level.
- Exhale and extend the hip to take the leg backwards pointing the foot.
- Repeat.











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Side Lying Abdominal Work









The side body is important to maintain to achieve balance for the menopausal body. There is a concern about "middle age spread" where the middle tends to thicken. Mostly this is due to hormonal imbalances and also stress. However, keeping strong in this area will help.

RIBCAGE ROCK

Benefits

Loosens the thoracic spine.

- Lie sideways on the mat with the underneath arm extended forward at chest level.
- Place the top hand on the bottom hand.
- Inhale to rock the ribcage forward.
- Exhale to rock the ribcage back.
- Repeat this several times.
- On the last exhale lower the top arm to the opposite side.

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OBLIQUES

- Lie sideways on the mat and bend both knees to one side.
- Place the hands behind the neck.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the head, neck and shoulders off the mat.
- Inhale to lower half way down.





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DOUBLE LEG OBLIQUE LIFT







- Lie sideways on the mat with the underneath arm extended forward at chest level and the top arm over head. Place the palm on the floor for support.
- Extend both legs.
- Inhale to begin to bring the top arm towards the feet.
- Exhale and lift the body and the legs on a diagonal line.

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- Inhale to lower one leg.
- Exhale legs together
- Inhale to lower the other leg.
- Exhale the legs together.
- Inhale to lower back down.









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OBLIQUES WITH HIP ABDUCTION







- Lie sideways in the well of the Pilates Arc™, with the underneath leg bent and the top leg lengthened with toes on the mat.
- Support the head with the underneath arm and place the top hand behind the head.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the torso off the Pilates Arc™.
- Inhale to lower.

With hip abduction

- As you lift the torso off the Pilates Arc™, lift the top leg to hip level.

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Prone Series

Back extension is possibly one of the most important factors in a menopausal session. Kyphosis becomes an issue during menopause. Keeping the back extensors strong will help slow down the inevitable stoop forward.

There are a number of ways to work the back. One is to articulate through the spine just like in bridging. The other is to lift the thoracic spine in a neutral position. Sometimes extreme kyphosis responds better to the neutral lift.



SWAN ON THE PILATES ARC™



Benefits

Works the back extensors from a wider range of motion.

- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the tips of the toes touching the floor and both hands at the sides of the body.
- Lower the head towards the floor to stretch the neck and shoulders.
- Inhale to begin articulating through the thoracic spine into extension.



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- Exhale and articulate the spine back down, starting from the bottom of the ribcage to the top of the neck.







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SWAN FROM THE FLOOR

Benefits

Strengthens the back extensors.

- Lie prone on the mat with the arms wide, elbows bent at shoulder level.
- If there is kyphosis, offer a support under the head or lift the head off the floor to begin.
- Inhale to begin to articulate through the thoracic spine, pressing into the forearms.
- Exhale and lower the chest back to the floor if this is the range of motion you have.
- Continue to lift the chest off the floor until the arms are extended.
- Exhale and lower the body towards the mat, articulating through the spine as you lower.







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Prone Arm Series

The Pilates Arc™ offers support for the thoracic and lumbar spine while performing arm work. This positioning over the Pilates Arc™ aids in maintaining correct alignment in the thoracic spine without too much discomfort for the kyphodic client. There is added resistance from gravity and light weights are appropriate.

TRICEPS



- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the ribcage and lumbar spine supported. The tips of the toes are on the floor.
- Pick up light weights (3lbs)
- Bend the elbows at the sides of the body.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and extend the arms towards the feet.



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RHOMBOIDS

- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the ribcage and lumbar spine supported. The tips of the toes are on the floor.
- Pick up light weights (3lbs)
- Take the arms out to the sides at shoulder level (or where comfortable)
- Keep the elbows soft.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the arms towards the ceiling initiating the movement from the shoulder blades.





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RHOMBOIDS- SHORT LEVER

- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the ribcage and lumbar spine supported. The tips of the toes are on the floor.
- Pick up light weights (3lbs).
- Bend the elbows towards the floor.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the elbows towards the ceiling.
- Inhale to lower the elbows.
- Repeat.





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SHOULDER ADDUCTION - PRONE ON THE MAT

- Lie prone on the mat with the legs together and the head just off the mat. Add support for the head if necessary.
- Bend the elbows and place them at shoulder level.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the elbows towards the ceiling, adducting the shoulder blades.
- Inhale to lower the elbows back to the mat.
- Exhale to lift.
- Inhale to lower half way down.
- Exhale to repeat.





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OVERHEAD ARMS ON THE PILATES ARC™

- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the ribcage and lumbar spine supported. The tips of the toes are on the floor.
- Place the arms by the head with the elbows bent.
- Inhale to lengthen the arms over the head.
- Exhale to pull the elbows back towards the hips.
- Repeat.





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OVER HEAD ARMS ON THE MAT

- Lie prone on the mat with the legs together and the head just off the mat. Add support if necessary.
- Bend the elbows and place them at shoulder level.
- Inhale and lengthen the arms overhead.
- Exhale and pull the elbows back towards the hips.
- Repeat.





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LUMBAR EXTENSION ON THE PILATES ARC™

Benefits

Strengthens the lumbar extensors, hamstrings and gluts.

- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the ribcage and lumbar spine supported. The tips of the toes are off the floor.
- Place the hands on the floor for support.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift both legs towards the ceiling initiating with the hamstring/glut connection.
- Inhale to lower.





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Variations

SWIMMING

- From the prone lumbar extension position, inhale and lift one leg and then exhale to change the legs.



GLUT SQUEEZE

- From the prone lumbar extension position, bend both knees in slight lateral rotation.
- Bring the heels together.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and squeeze the gluts and lift the heels towards the ceiling.



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LUMBAR EXTENSION ON THE MAT

Benefits

Strengthens the lumbar extensors, hamstrings and gluts.

- Lie prone on the mat. If needed, place a support under the head.
- Place the arms by the sides.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift the legs off the mat.
- Inhale to lower.





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LUMBAR AND THORACIC EXTENSION ON THE MAT

Benefits

Strengthens the spine extensors, hamstrings and gluts.

- Lie prone on the mat. If needed, place a support under the head.
- Place the arms by the sides.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift both the upper and lower back.
- Inhale to lower.





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LUMBAR AND THORACIC EXTENSION ON THE MAT WITH EXTERNAL ROTATION

Benefits

Strengthens the spine extensors, hamstrings and gluts.

Works the rotator cuff.



- Lie prone on the mat. If needed, place a support under the head.
- Place the arms by the sides.
- Inhale and begin to externally rotate the shoulders.
- Exhale and continue to rotate the shoulders and extend both lumbar and thoracic spine.
- Inhale to internally rotate the shoulders and lower the body.





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SWIMMING

Benefits

Strengthens the spine extensors, hamstrings and gluts.

- Lie prone on the mat. If needed, place a support under the head.
- Place the arms by the sides.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lift both the upper and lower back.
- Inhale and exhale to change legs.







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LUMBAR AND THORACIC EXTENSION ON THE PILATES ARC™ WITH EXTERNAL ROTATION OF THE SHOULDER

- Balance the body over the Pilates Arc™ with both feet and both arms off the floor.
- Place the arms by the hips.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and continue to rotate the shoulders and extend both lumbar and thoracic spine.
- Inhale to lower.





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ROCK

- While in this position begin to rock in extension by initiating the movement from the pelvis.





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TORSO ROTATION AND EXTENSION

This is another important area of the body to maintain strength. Rather than just working the back extensors in one plane, we try and move the body through all the planes.

Benefits

Works the back extensors, obliques, hamstring/gluts and hip adductors.



- Lie prone over the Pilates Arc™ with the ribcage and lumbar spine supported. The feet are off the floor.
- Place one hand on the floor for support and the other hand on the small of the back.
- Inhale
- Exhale and reach the back hand towards the opposite foot, rotating and extending the torso.
- Lift the opposite foot towards the hand.
- Inhale to lower.



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TORSO ROTATION AND EXTENSION ON THE MAT

Benefits

Works the back extensors, obliques, hamstring/gluts and hip adductors.

- Lie prone on the mat with legs together.
- Place one hand on the floor for support and the other hand on the small of the back.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and reach the back hand towards the opposite foot, rotating and extending the torso.
- Lift the opposite foot towards the hand.
- Inhale to lower.







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Standing Series

Try at some point in all your sessions to add a few standing exercises. Apart from being functional, this position will load the pelvic floor and the bones.



SQUATS

Using medium weights for extra resistance.

- Stand facing the curve of the Pilates Arc™. Hold the weights in both hands.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and place one foot on top of the Pilates Arc™.
- Bend both knees and bend both elbows into a bicep curl.
- Inhale to step back bringing the arms back down to the sides.
- Repeat with the other leg.





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Variations

- Inhale to either push off back to two legs or for more challenge push off onto one leg.





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STEP UPS

- Stand facing the curve of the Pilates Arc™. Both hands by the sides.
- Inhale to place one foot on the top of the curve.
- Exhale to step up and place the both feet on the Pilates Arc™.
- Alternatively, for more challenge, lift one knee off the Pilates Arc™ as you step up.

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STANDING - SIDEWAYS

- Stand sideways to the curve of the Pilates Arc™.
- Inhale and place one foot on the top of the curve.
- Exhale and step up, releasing the opposite leg to the side.
- Inhale to step down.







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PUSH UPS ON THE PILATES ARC™

Benefits

Strengthens and stabilises the shoulder girdle.

The Pilates Arc™ offers less stability.



- Place the Pilates Arc™ upside down.
- Walk the legs away until in a plank position with both hands on the Pilates Arc™.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and bend the elbows to lower the chest towards the Pilates Arc™.
- Inhale to recover.



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PUSH UPS FROM THE FLOOR

Benefits

More stable than on the Pilates Arc™

- Facing the mat, place both hands and feet on the mat in a plank position.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lower the body towards the mat.
- Inhale to press up.
- Repeat.





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PUSH UPS FROM THE FLOOR-MODIFIED

Benefits

Less intense than either the plank position or on the Pilates Arc™

- Place both hands and feet on the mat in a quadruped position.
- Walk the hands forward until the body weight is over the arms and cross the ankles.
- Inhale.
- Exhale and lower the body towards the mat.
- Inhale to press up.
- Repeat.





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NOTES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carolyne Anthony



Carolyne Anthony has been in the Dance, Fitness and Pilates world for over 30 years. She trained as a professional dancer in London, England in the late 1970's. She obtained her teaching diploma in 1982 and went on to dance professionally in Europe, Asia and Africa. She remains a member of the Royal Academy of Dancing and an Associate of The Imperial Society of Teacher of Dance. Carolyne was introduced to Pilates in 1983, at the prompting of her Jazz instructor. She found Alan Herdman and continued to learn from him until she left for the USA. It wasn't until 2001 that she realized there were certification programs for Pilates and she promptly signed up for them. She has studied Polestar, PhysicalMind, CoreGrace and Basi techniques. On her to do list is to certify with the PMA. Carolyne is now on the faculty of Balanced Body University.

In the 80's as a newcomer to the USA her focus turned to fitness as the aerobics boom began to hit. Carolyne certified with AFAA and the AEA as a group fitness instructor and went on to study the PACE (people with arthritis can exercise) program. She put all this knowledge to good use as an instructor with the New England Health and Racquet Clubs.

While living in Connecticut, Carolyne also joined the faculty of the Hartford Conservatory of Music and Dance, teaching ballet, jazz and pedagogy to the diploma students. She danced with the New England Dance Theater and helped found and became the Artistic Director of the Enfield Civic Ballet Company. It was during this time that she became pregnant with her first child.

Carolyne was dismayed to learn that no matter how many certifications or diplomas she had acquired, nothing had given her any information on how to exercise during her pregnancy. Being too scared to do what she was doing, Carolyne opted to stop moving during the pregnancy. Finding herself with an unrecognizable body after the birth of her daughter, she busied herself with designing an exercise program that was both safe and beneficial for pregnant women. Her goal was to prepare the body for the birth, not just to be fit. Through the course of her next two pregnancies, Carolyne refined her skills and knowledge and today you have the highly successful Pre and Post natal Pilates Specialist programs.

Carolyne works from a holistic point of view, seeing the body as an amazing instrument that needs the correct attention in order to work properly. Her efforts to make this possible for her clients has led her to study for her Masters in Natural Health, become certified as a Birth Doula and to learn other healing modalities . Currently Carolyne is a level two Reiki practitioner, Level 1 Myofascial release practitioner (John Barnes approach) and an Esoteric Healer. Her love of dance is evident in the way she instructs her movement classes whether Pilates or fitness.

Today The Center for Women's Fitness has 12 host studios around the world, 10 faculty members and more than 300 certified teachers teaching the method. The Center continues to expand.

Credits
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