

Why Pilates?

Pilates was created to work directly with the deepest muscles in the body, creating a strong core without the pain associated with conventional exercises. There is no ripping of muscle tissue, jarring impact on your joints or exhaustion of your muscles beyond effectiveness. Each movement has a prescribed number of repetitions. You do not want to produce thick, **stiff** muscles.

Pilates promotes self-sufficiency. Once learned, you can practice these exercises on your own --- with or without Pilates equipment. Pilates has a rehabilitative quality because it reduces tightness, stiffness & weakness and restores flexibility, tone, & strength. This improves body movement & function.

The Powerhouse. What is it? The movements of the Pilates Method are instrumental in maintaining good posture and alignment. These are key elements in proper muscle use and make even the most difficult daily tasks seem easier. There are a band of muscles around the center of your body known as the **Powerhouse**. They include:

- Stomach (Abs) -- Obliques (Inner/Outer), Transverse Abdominals (Lower/Deep), Rectus Abdominis (Upper)
- Hips
- Lower back
- Buttocks (Glutes - Maximus, Medius, Minimus)

What is moving is not necessarily what is being worked.

The concept of working all the muscles simultaneously but continuously switching movements is the most effective way to build stamina. The core is not moving, but is always engaged. This builds strength & endurance for more complex movements in which the "Core" provides your center of stability.

The Matwork Principles - 6 Basics + 1 (Pace)

- Concentration (focus on what you are doing)
- Control (deliberate movements)
- Center (Core)
- Fluidity (ease of movement)
- Precision (location, location, location)
- Breathe (lateral Breathing expanding your ribcage)
- Pace (will increase as you progress)

Key Elements to Mastering the Mat

- Using Your Powerhouse
- Scooping your Belly - Pull Navel to back toward Spine
- Lengthening
 - ✓ Opposition of body to lengthen - Reach up/across, etc.
 - ✓ Long neck (Head over Chest)
 - ✓ Long & Loose Feet (except when flexing)
- Neutral Spine (with natural curve in low back)
 - ✓ Muscle Control without Tension
 - ✓ Shoulders Relaxed & Down
 - ✓ Ribcage pulled down to mat; not arched up
 - ✓ Chest Lifted but relaxed so you can breathe out & in (across); not up & down (shallow)
- Pilates Stance (Small V with feet - heels touching)
 - ✓ Disengages the Quads and targets hips, buttocks & inner/outer thighs
 - ✓ Heels touching, knees soft & straight; but not locked
 - ✓ Squeeze the buttocks
- Redefining the Body's Shape
 - ✓ Trim Hips, Thighs & Buttocks
 - ✓ Flatten Your Belly
 - ✓ Trim Your Waist
 - ✓ Sculpt & Tone Your Arms, Legs & Upper Back
 - ✓ Improved Posture Makes You Appear Taller

Typical Beginner/Intermediate Program Includes, But Is Not Limited To:

- The Hundred
- The Roll-up
- The Rollover
- Single Leg Circles
- Rolling Like a Ball
- Single Bent Leg Stretch
- Double Bent Leg Stretch
- Single Straight Leg Stretch
- Double Straight Leg Stretch
- Spine Stretch Forward
- Spinal Rotation (Knee Drops)
- The Seal

- Side-Lying Leg Series
 - ✓ Up & Down
 - ✓ Small Circles
 - ✓ Front & Back
 - ✓ Side Passe'

- Swimming
- Single Leg Kicks
- Spinal Lifts

- Push-ups
- Planks

Modifications are provided with bent knees, neck support, back support, decreased range of motion, decreased repetitions, increased stability, etc. **Pilates should never be painful!**