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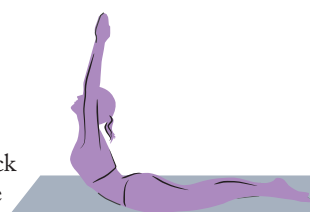
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# Happy NEW You

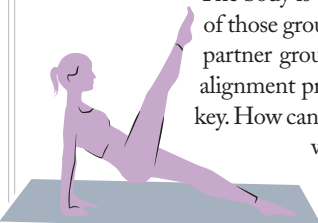
By Miriam Richter

The New Year is here and it is time to get back into the old routine including getting back to the gym. Here's an idea: why not try something new for 2007? Maybe that is just the thing you need to keep you motivated past January 15th. Why not try Pilates?



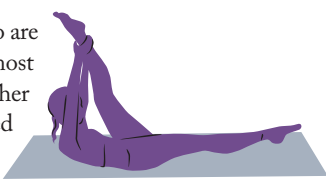
OK, you say, don't I need to lift weights? If you are a professional football player or just someone who wants a lot of muscular bulk, then the answer is "yes. If you are not looking for bulk, then the answer is "not really."

Let's look at weight training and the problems it can cause for your body. The body is comprised of opposing muscle groups. If one of those groups becomes much stronger than its opposing partner group, as is often the case with weight training, alignment problems occur. Balancing your strength is the key. How can you truly be strong when one muscle group is weak and the opposing group is tight? Pilates can help to rebalance your body.

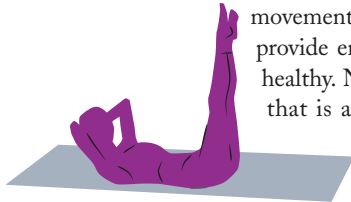


Another problem that occasionally occurs with weight training is torn muscles, often at the joint level. Pilates exercises begin at the joint level and work outward to create stronger muscles while protecting the joints. The student is taught to stabilize joints, resulting in less joint/muscle injury and stronger ligaments.

If you are among the majority of people who are simply looking for a way to get fit, Pilates most certainly is for you. It works the core like no other form of exercise can do. Joseph Pilates believed that one had to have "central stability" in order to have "distal mobility". That means that all of the movements of the body are generated directly or indirectly from your pelvis area which needs to be strong and stable. The usual abdominal exercises generally involve some sort of crunch which targets the large six pack or rectus abdominus muscle. Pilates "core engagement" focuses on all abdominal muscles including obliques and serratus, as well as the often neglected deep skeletal abdominal muscles and the pelvic floor muscles.

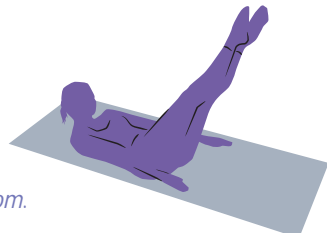


Pilates does not neglect other parts of the body, it is a functional form of exercise which works the entire body with each movement. We used to think that Pilates did not provide enough loading needed to keep bones healthy. Now we know that the spring tension that is a hallmark of Pilates affords enough resistance to keep bones strong.



Remember that Pilates (or any resistance training) is part of an entire wellness program which includes some sort of aerobic activity, resistance training, stretching, and a nutritional program. Did I mention that Pilates will take care of two of those requirements - stretching and resistance training? Happy New Year (you)!

Miriam Richter is owner of Pilates Bodyworks of Coral Springs. She is a registered nurse, certified Personal Trainer and certified Pilates Instructor. E-mail her at [mrichter@theparklander.com](mailto:mrichter@theparklander.com).



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