

Pronounced as 'Pilah-teez', this method was developed by Joseph H Pilates more than 80 years ago. Some 500 exercises were created to bring the mind and the body together into flowing movements without stress to provide an effective conditioning program. Coupled with a normal, healthy diet, with as little as three equipment-based Pilates sessions a week, you'll see fabulous results, including a slender, toned, lean, strong and healthy body. The best



Nawaz demonstrating the Pilates Magic Circle and (below) Jennifer Aniston and Madonna have all benefited from Pilates

Want a toned, lean and healthy look?

Nawaz Modi-Singhania tells you everything you need to know about Pilates

results are seen if one combines Pilates with any form of cardio exercise. A system of springs of varying tensions, levers, carriages, straps and pulleys offer the body resistance, taking the form of equipment such as the Reformer-Trapezius Combo, Studio Reformer, Allegro Reformer, Combo chair, Wunda chair, C-Shaper, Magic Circle, Barrels, Swiss balls, etc.

Mind-Body conditioning

This method stresses on the blend of Western and Eastern approaches to well-being. The Western approach is dynamic, with emphasis on motion, muscle tone and

strength. The Eastern approach is static, with the emphasis on rest, contemplation, stretching and limbering. In both methods, the mind can exert great control over the body, while physical exercise can improve mental fatigue. Essentially it allows the mind and body to help one another by working in complete harmony together.

Getting started

Hundreds of exercises can be done on Pilates equipments. Some of the larger equipments being the Cadillac, reformers, chairs and barrels. Smaller equipment includes boxes, bands, core boards and Swiss balls. Unlike typical fitness training (primarily gymming), the method is easy and gentle on the body, almost to the point of deception, where one might feel that it can't be working as it's not straining the body. However, it is deep-tissue work and hugely effective. The method is also used for rehabilitative

purposes. Fantastic results are seen in a short time for those with spinal issues, knee problems, arthritis, etc. It is recommended for pregnant women as it corrects common discomforts of pregnancy such as back pain, lordosis (postural deviation, which occurs in pregnancy, also called the sway-back), calf cramps, loosening of pelvic floor muscles, flabbiness, weight gain etc. Naturally those with any health problems or special needs will need modifications to their exercise regime and must perform them only under adequate professional supervision.

- Always warm up before starting your exercise session and take the time to cool down right at the end.
 - Begin with easier exercises and as the body gets used to them after a few sessions, gradually move on to more challenging ones.
 - Keep sipping on room temperature water every now and then during the workout.
 - Never push to the point of pain or discomfort. In Pilates, pain is a sign to stop. Drop what you're doing and just move on to the next exercise.
 - All exercises should be done in a smooth, fluid, non-jerky fashion.
 - Never lock the joints back or hyper-extend them. Joints to watch out for in this regard are the knees and elbows.
 - Breathing patterns are important, so pay attention to instructions given.
- International stars like Madonna, Meg Ryan, Gwyneth Paltrow, Elizabeth Hurley, Katherine Hepburn, Jennifer Anniston, Cindy Crawford, Sarah Jessica Parker and others have turned to this system over the years.

