Pilates

The Introduction of Pilates

Joseph Pilates developed Pilates in the early 1900’s using combined techniques from Zen, yoga, and ancient Greek and Roman physical regimens. Joseph created the practice based on what he called “contrology”: the science of control. One of the leading causes of injury in most physical activity stems from situations where the individual loses control over their body movements. If this loss occurs, even for a fraction of a second, the body is extremely prone to injury.

Pilates is a slow motion form of activity that practices mindfulness through control of movement. It is a type of exercise that strengthens muscles in order to further prevent injury as well. It can be modified in many ways to accommodate past injuries, and can be modified for your own personal recovery. This being said, the poses can be difficult, so it is beneficial to at least start off taking part in Pilates under an instructor, to make sure you understand the poses. Most gyms and training centres will have a lot of the materials you may need to do some trickier poses, and the group mentality of a Pilates class may give you incentive to continue with the practice each week.

Health Benefits of Pilates

- Core strength
- Core stability
- Overall body strength, physique, tone
- Improved posture, flexibility, balance, and agility
- Improved co-ordination of movement and breathing
- Proper spinal alignment
- Improved body awareness
- Stress relief
- Increased control of back

“I must be right. Never an aspirin. Never injured a day in my life. The whole country, the whole world, should be doing my exercises. They’d be happier.” - Joseph Hubertus Pilates, in 1965, age 86.
Tips and Tricks to Getting Started

What Muscles Are Being Activated During Pilates?

Muscles being activated during Pilates include:
- Gluteal (buttock) muscles
- Core muscles
- Small inner muscles that focus on body position (proprioception) that do not often receive much attention
- Back muscles

Getting Ready to Practice

Here’s what you will need to get started with a Pilates Program:
- Yoga mat (a lot of Pilates moves can be done with just a mat)
- Comfortable clothing
- Shoes (optional)
- Foam roller
- Balance board
- Exercise bands
- Inflatable exercise ball

Beginner Exercises

The Hundreds

A) Lay down on a mat, and tense and flex your legs while pointing your toes. Keep your arms stable at your sides
B) Lift both legs, your head, neck and shoulders off the mat, keeping your toes pointed and arms strong. Make sure to engage your core as you do so, flexing the stomach muscles as well as the gluteal muscles. The action of lifting your legs should stem from your core muscles, and your neck should feel relaxed. The lifting of the torso should occur due to the engaged core muscles. Look at your pointed toes.
C) Pump your arms up and down (five times on the inhale, five times on the exhale).

Pilates Single Leg-Heel Raise

A) Make sure your back is flat, and your core is activated as you squeeze a small inflatable ball between your hamstrings and calf muscles. Your leg muscles should be activated and strong
B) Keeping all these muscles engaged, lift your leg until it is in line with the back. Do 5-10 repetitions, and then switch legs.

Pilates Single Leg Curl

A) Start in the same position as the position B in “Pilates Single Leg-Heel Raise”
B) While keeping all those muscles engaged, bring your calf muscle down to your hamstring, squeezing the ball tight. Hold this for a few seconds and then bring it back to position A. Do 15 repetitions, then switch legs.
Pilates Classes
Pilates classes are currently being run through the HPC at the University of Guelph by physiotherapist and Stott certified instructor Shannon Clutton Carr. For more info on the program run through HPC, e-mail hpc@uoguelph.ca

Nutrition Counselling Services
It is very important to eat properly before and after exercise in order to fuel your body prior to physical activity and to replace nutrient stores post-exercise. The Registered Dieticians at the HPC can provide valuable insight into the relationship between nutrition and exercise.

Physiotherapy Services
Injuries can unfortunately force people to take a break from their workout routine. If you experience aches or pains during exercise (knee or back pain, ankle sprains, etc.) it is often caused by an underlying issue such as a muscle imbalance. Physiotherapists at the HPC can use their knowledge of anatomy and rehabilitation techniques to prevent and reduce injuries and to get you back to taking part in physical activity as soon as possible.

References and Further Reading
- http://www.pilatesmethodalliance.org
- http://www.saga.co.uk/health/fitness/key-benefits-of-pilates.aspx
- http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/fitness/in-depth/pilates-for-beginners/art-20047673
- http://www.womenshealthmag.com/tags/pilates
- http://www.pilatesstyle.com
- The Women’s Health Big Book of Pilates – By Brooke Siler
- http://www.in-joypilates.com/images/joseph_pilates_5.jpg

For more information on services offered by the Health and Performance Centre visit: https://www.uoguelph.ca/hpc/our-services