

# What is the 'Pilates Method'?

The 'Pilates Method' is a body conditioning and postural alignment exercise technique that uses a combination of mat-work, Pilates-styled resistance equipment and free weights to help develop a strong, well-balanced body. Joseph Pilates developed the original methods and equipment back in the 1920s, adopting various aspects of gymnastics, martial arts, dance and yoga.



Pippa Wylde recently opened Hampshire's premier dedicated Pilates studio which is located on the Herriard Estate, just outside Basingstoke. The new studio has been fully equipped with the very latest professional resistance machines brought over specially from the United States. Clients will now be able to experience Pilates exercise in a spacious and relaxed atmosphere, whilst at the same time being taught by one of the UK's leading and most experienced Pilates instructors.

It was the years of dedication and discipline as a soloist with the London Royal Ballet Company that led Pippa into the world of Pilates. A need to remain flexible and injury free were important 'drivers' for Pippa and Pilates, unlike any other form of exercise or movement, filled that role perfectly with its combination of strength and flexibility.

During her time at Covent Garden, Pippa travelled the world dancing many leading roles and with many legendary names including Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rudolf Nureyev (his Lilac Fairy in Sleeping Beauty), Margot Fonteyn and Jonathan Cope to name only a few.

Pippa was first introduced to Pilates by her close friend, Gordon Thompson (co-founder of the 'Body Control Pilates Association') who is a leading figure in the UK world of Pilates and who has been credited with being instrumental in introducing Pilates to the UK from the United States back in the late 1970's.



## What makes Pilates so special?

Undoubtedly, the resistance equipment used is unique and has been specifically designed to strengthen, lengthen, balance, tone and relax the user. Unlike traditional methods of training and body development which tend to produce short bulky muscles (the types most prone to injury), Pilates resistance equipment elongates the spine, increasing the elasticity of muscles and the flexibility of the joints. This balance between strength and flexibility dramatically reduces the likelihood of injury.

## Who can practice Pilates?

Pilates can be practised by people of all ages with any level of fitness. It's not only used by dancers, athletes and sports stars wishing to improve performance and reduce injuries but also by young and old alike striving for differing levels of physical fitness and/or rehabilitation.

## Who should not practice Pilates?

As with all types of fitness regimes, persons with specific medical conditions or injuries such as osteoporosis, joint or tendon pain, pregnancy or arthritis should consult their physician before taking part. Exercises can be modified to accommodate many medical conditions and indeed Pilates has long been considered by many medical practitioners to be positively beneficial as an aid to recovery.

## What are the benefits?

Correct postural alignment and a reduced risk of injury are two of the main benefits of this technique although you can also expect an increase in body flexibility, mobility, balance, and body-awareness as well as a decrease in back and other more general pains. In addition, Pilates specifically tones and strengthens deeper abdominal muscles and improves support of the lower back as well as relaxing tensed neck and shoulder muscles.

## What are its basic principles?

In order to offer the best possible health and fitness regime we have aligned our classes to the 'Body-Control' Pilates method that centres around eight basic Pilates principles: relaxation, concentration, alignment, breathing, centring, coordination, flowing movement and stamina. The Body-Control Pilates Association is Europe's foremost professional Pilates organisation with almost 800 teaching members spread throughout the UK and with many more in Europe. Exercises, based upon the above Pilates principles, are carefully designed to meet individual needs and personal fitness levels.

## How easy is it to learn Pilates?

Pilates is relatively straightforward and easy to learn. If you are starting as a complete beginner then there are four stages to be completed on your way to becoming truly proficient. Progress from stage to stage will depend upon your general health and fitness levels and most importantly, your commitment to the Pilates programme.

## What size are your studio sessions?

Studio session sizes depend upon the Pilates stage that you are at and also upon your chosen method of instruction. It is possible to have private one to one or semi-private one to two/three instruction, and indeed this is the ideal way to learn and to obtain the maximum benefit and value from Pilates classes. Open studio sessions for more experienced Pilates clients cater for up to a maximum of 6 persons.

## What should I wear?

Ideally, your clothing should allow the alignment of the body to be clearly seen by your instructor. It should also be comfortable and able to stretch with your body movements and ideally should not be too loose fitting. Leggings, shorts and t-shirts are all suitable. Exercises are carried out in bare feet (for safety) or socks if preferred.

## When will I see results?

The speed of results will naturally vary from person to person and will be dependant upon your commitment to an effective Pilates programme. Your overall level of health and fitness are a result of genetics, lifestyle habits and your current physical condition - all of which contribute to just how quickly you will see results.

## How often should I attend classes?

To achieve the best results we recommend a minimum of two sessions per week, although it is also possible to attend once per week at the studio combined with practising once or twice a week at home. The more you practice the quicker your progress and the sooner you will begin to see and feel real results.

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