

Chandler Moore, owner of Core Pilates on 17th, recently became certified through the Pink Ribbon program to offer Pilates classes to breast cancer survivors. The exercise above is an example of one that she would use to help a woman rehabilitate following surgery. Photo courtesy of Core Pilates on 17th.

Personalized Pilates

Specialized populations from Baby Boomers to breast cancer survivors can benefit from Pilates.

As professional dancers for the Radio City Rockettes, Kimberly and Katherine Corp improved their strength and prevented injuries by doing Pilates. When they opened their 4,000-square-foot Pilates studio in bustling Manhattan, the identical twins expected their classes to fill up with professional dancers. Instead, regular working men and women walked into their doors. Years later, they are helping everyone from older adults to breast cancer survivors change their lives through Pilates.

"It's wonderful to be able to affect a change in someone who doesn't know their body well and discovers the wonders of the human body," Kimberly says. "When one of our clients wakes up for the first time in three years without pain, it keeps my sister and me going."

With its low-impact approach and focus on strength, flexibility and balance, Pilates exercises can help individuals of all ages and fitness levels improve their health and well being. Some fitness facilities and Pilates studios now offer private and group sessions for Baby Boomers, rehabilitative exercise programs for breast cancer survivors and sport-specific training for golfers looking to improve their game.

"Pilates is such a great technique because it's so versatile and helps you to do every other activity in your life better whether you're sitting at your computer, running a marathon or pole vaulting," says Chandler Moore, owner of San Francisco-based Core Pilates on 17th, which specializes in classes for pregnant women and breast cancer survivors.

Standing Tall

Seniors make up one group of growing Pilates participants. Many older adults walk around with a rounded back and shoulders, and when they look at themselves in the mirror, they don't like what they see, says Mary Ann Smith, the director of the senior wellness program at the Almaden Valley Athletic Club (AVAC) in San Jose, CA. To maintain good posture, seniors need to build strong core muscles, and Pilates can help them to stand taller and improve their self confidence, she says.

To cater to its 700 members over the age of 55, AVAC launched a senior Pilates program five years ago. The club charges seniors \$12 per one-hour mat class and \$15 per one-hour reformer class. While the senior Pilates program hasn't significantly affected the club's bottom line, the new classes have helped to improve senior member retention, Smith says.

The older adults are required to take an introductory class before they can enroll in a senior or mainstream class.

"You don't want to throw an older person into a class with a 23-year-old who can do the spinal twist," Smith says. "It becomes an issue of self confidence and self efficacy. It makes them feel less than what they are."

Many of the seniors who sign up for classes at Pilates on Fifth opt for private sessions because the training is catered 100 percent to their special needs, Kimberly Corp says. During the classes, seniors often use rebounders, which allow them to increase their heart rate safely without causing damage to their joints.

"As people age, they're always looking for alternative ways of fitness," says Kimberly. "Through Pilates, they can strengthen the muscles in perfect alignment. While it's great to help the 20- and 30-year-olds, it's truly rewarding when you can help seniors to stand up straighter and feel better."

Protecting Golfers' Spines

While Pilates can help seniors to improve their posture and increase their self confidence, the exercises also can protect golfers' spines by strengthening their core muscles. About 90 percent of golfers on a championship golf tour suffer from back ailments, according to the Northern California Golf Association.

"In golf, all the movements need to come from the core," says Monica Clyde, owner of the Pilates for Golf Coach (a golf fitness training program) and author of *The Golfer's Guide to Pilates*. "Golf is hard on the spine. We're using our body mechanics in ways that aren't natural to the body."

Golfers are often focused on swing mechanics when they first start their

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Monica Clyde, owner of the Pilates for Golf Coach, strengthens golfers' core through Pilates and teaches training classes on golf conditioning. Photo courtesy of Monica Clyde.

Pilates classes. Clyde tries to retrain the golfers to not get caught up in their swing and instead focus on how the body moves the club. When the golfers realize that an athletic body is the most important piece of equipment on a golf course, a light bulb often goes on, she says.

"There are millions of dollars spent on golf equipment every year, but if your body doesn't move in a way that is mechanically sound, your equipment won't be worth much," Clyde says. "It won't increase the amount of external rotation on takeaway if you're limited in range of motion."

Pilates for golf isn't a gimmick or a passing fad, but rather a trend that is here to stay, Clyde says. Golfers such as Tiger Woods and Anika Sorenson incorporated Pilates into their training regimen, and now recreational golfers are following their lead. During the Pilates sessions, golfers learn to build stronger, more flexible bodies and focus the mind to control their movements.

Fitness facilities and Pilates studios nationwide offer golf conditioning classes, and Clyde travels around the country to train instructors. So far, she's trained 150 instructors from 10 Pilates studios during her \$449 workshop, and she plans to offer a program for PGA teaching professionals, create a DVD from her book and launch a juniors program.

Range of Motion

Golfers aren't the only ones seeing benefits from Pilates. Breast cancer survivors can do Pilates to regain movement after surgery. When Doreen Puglisi, the founder of the Pilates Center in Fairfield, NJ, had a mastectomy, no formal physical therapy was prescribed to help with the loss of mobility in her affected arm. The hospital gave her a sheet of paper with three rehabilitative exercises.

"It was very painful, and I could barely lift my arm," she says. "The first time I went to wash my hair, I couldn't lift my arms high enough to put shampoo in my hair."

She began performing exercises from her Pink Ribbon Program, which she developed six years before she was diagnosed with an early stage of breast cancer. Doctors often referred breast cancer patients to Puglisi, an exercise physiologist, and she helped them to increase their arm strength and improve their range of motion. As a breast cancer survivor herself, she found ways to tweak the program and develop a series of 30 Pilates exercises for post-operative breast cancer survivors to strengthen their shoulder, chest, back and abdominal muscles (see p. 70 for samples of these rehabilitative exercises).

To get the word out nationwide, Puglisi sent information about the Pink Ribbon program to hospitals, obstetricians, breast cancer support groups and radiology centers. She also enlisted the help of the Corp sisters, owners of Pilates on Fifth, to offer specific classes to breast cancer survivors and develop a nationwide training program for Pink Ribbon instructor certification. So far, about 100 instructors have been certified in Ohio, San Francisco and Michigan.

During the three-day, 18-hour training session, which costs \$485, students learn about the types of breast cancer, where it starts in the body and how it spreads; the stages of breast cancer; surgeries to remove the tumor; reconstructive surgery; and the effects of chemotherapy.

Stephanie Secord, owner of Windham Pilates, became certified in the Pink Ribbon program and recently taught a

Training Teachers for Specialized Populations

Fitness facilities may want to boost their number of clients by offering specialized Pilates classes, but to prevent injuries and provide the maximum benefits for their students, they need to make sure they hire well-trained and experienced instructors, says Kevin Bowen, executive director of the Pilates Method Alliance, which recently introduced its first national certification exam for Pilates teachers.

"The problem in the United States is that the training has been cut back so extensively," he says. "The regular training is barely enough to get them to know Pilates. Once they finish their understanding of movement and grasp the exercises, they can move into other areas and learn more."

Pilates Equipment

- AGM Group/Aeromat, www.aeromats.com
- Alcan Airex, www.alcanairex.com
- Balanced Body Pilates, www.balancedbody.com
- efi Sports Medicine, www.efisportsmedicine.com
- Hugger Mugger, www.huggermugger.com
- IM-X Pilates Inc., www.xercise.com
- Motus USA, www.motususa.com
- OPTP, www.optp.com
- Peak Pilates, www.peakpilates.com
- PHI Pilates, www.phipilates.com
- Power Systems Inc., www.powersystems.com
- SPRI Products Inc., www.spriproducts.com
- Stott Pilates, www.stottpilates.com
- The Pilates Coach, www.thepilatescoach.com

free class to six breast cancer survivors at the Southern New Hampshire Medical Center. When she offers classes for breast cancer survivors in her studio, she plans to keep the cost down for these women.

"After going through so much medically and physically, it shouldn't cost an arm and a leg to get your body back," she says.

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Seniors often opt for private sessions at Pilates on Fifth and as they feel more comfortable with the moves, join a group class. Photo courtesy of Pilates on Fifth.

"Teaching these classes is my way of giving back to the community."

Moore of Core Pilates on 17th sponsored a group of six students at her studio in San Francisco in June and plans to host another workshop in October and November. Before she was Pink Ribbon certified, Moore remembers working with a breast cancer survivor whose armpit and neck area were significantly affected from a surgery she had 10 years before.

"Other than doing gentle, passive movements, I didn't know how to treat her other than for shoulder injuries," she says. Since then, she has been educated on the kinds of reconstructive surgeries and proper rehabilitative exercises.

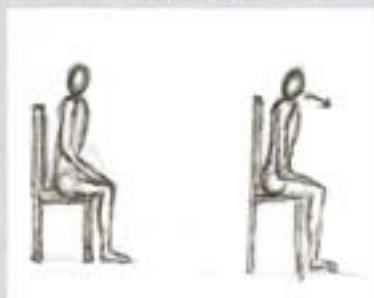
One of the breast cancer surgeries involves cutting the rectus abdominus and pulling it upwards to create a bundle underneath the breast. When a woman has this kind of operation, it's impossible for her to do any kind of abdominal work, yet Puglisi remembers a trainer at one club who made a breast cancer survivor do crunches for 12 weeks. When the woman didn't make any progress, she e-mailed Puglisi, who advised her to work with a more qualified trainer.

By hiring well-trained instructors, fitness facility owners can increase membership by attracting special populations to Pilates. By helping a senior to stand taller, a breast cancer survivor to increase her range of motion and a golfer to prevent back pain, a Pilates instructor can make a difference one person at a time. ☐

Pilates Exercises for Breast Cancer Survivors

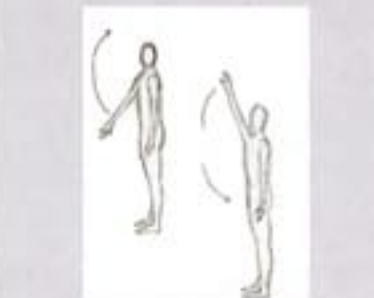
The Pink Ribbon program offers a series of Pilates exercises to help breast cancer survivors improve their range of motion in their arms, shoulders and other affected areas following surgery. The program has three phases, which each last two to four weeks. The goal of the program is to increase the breast cancer survivor's range of motion to the point where she can feel comfortable in a mainstream Pilates class. For more information and to buy a book of exercises, visit www.pinkribbonprogram.com.

Warmup: Shoulder Rolls



Gently roll the shoulders forward and back, allowing the upper back to release slightly as you do so.

Phase 1 Exercise: Walk Up the Wall



- 1. Starting Position**
Stand or sit with one side of your body next to a wall; arm low, touching the wall at a 45 degree angle from your body.
- 2. Inhale**
Start to walk your fingers up the wall, as high as your range of motion will allow.
- 3. Exhale**
Walk back down the wall to the starting position.
- 4. Repeat**
Three to four times; then switch arms.

Source: Illustrations by Laurice Nemez. Description of exercises courtesy of the Pink Ribbon Program founder and program director, Doreen Puglisi.

Phase 2 Exercise: Touchdown



- 1. Starting Position**
Sit or stand with arms in front of the body, free or holding a pole or a flexible band.
- 2. Inhale**
- 3. Exhale**
Lift the arms overhead (if holding a pole or a band, then slightly pull apart).
- 4. Inhale**
Lower the arms back down.
- 5. Repeat**
Steps 3 or 4 five or six times.

Phase 3 Exercise: Mermaid Stretch



- 1. Starting Position**
Sit on one hip with both legs bent towards the opposite side.
- 2. Inhale**
Reach the arm of the hip you're sitting on overhead or on your shoulder.
- 3. Exhale**
Bend your body over towards your legs, reaching the arm further over on the opposite side.
- 4. Inhale**
Restore your spine to vertical.
- 5. Exhale**
Drop the arm by your side.
- 6. Repeat**
Do steps 2 to 5 three or four times, then change sides.