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## WELL NEWS



ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Breathing can be hazardous to your health

According to a recent EPA report, New York has the worst air in the nation

By SCOTT LAFFEE  
COWLEY NEWS SERVICE

A recent Environmental Protection Agency report found that New York had the worst air in the nation. California came in second, despite decades of work trying to reduce smog and other airborne carcinogens.

If this doesn't strike you as particularly upsetting news, pick up a March 15 copy of *The American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*. Inside is a Harvard University study that found that for each decrease of just one microgram of soot per cubic meter of air, death rates from cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness and lung cancer decline 3 percent. That equates to extending the lives of roughly 75,000 people each year in the United States.

Harvard researchers say pollution levels in the United States have generally dropped since they began their study in 1974. But the EPA report suggests these levels are still too high.

To wit: One in every 15,000 Californians, according to the EPA's National Scale Air Toxics Assessment, is at risk of contracting cancer from breathing the air over his or her lifetime.

It's worse in Los Angeles County, where the ratio is one in every 10,700. The national average is one in every 24,000 Americans.

## BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

The longest muscle in the human body is the sartorius, which passes diagonally across the front of the thigh and helps rotate the leg so that you can sit cross-legged. The name derives from the Latin *sartus*, meaning patched or repaired — an allusion to tailors who used to sit cross-legged while at work.

## GET ME THAT, STAT!

Sixty percent to 70 percent of people experience "hypnic jerks" — noticeable muscular twitches that occur as they fall asleep. The cause is unknown.

## FROM THE WAITING ROOM

One day Dr. Joseph Bell (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's medical school mentor and the inspiration behind Sherlock Holmes) gathered some students around a patient's bed to demonstrate his deductive method of diagnosis.

"Aren't you a handsman?" he asked the sick man.

The man nodded.

"You see, gentlemen, I am right," Bell declared. "It is quite simple. This man has a paralysis of the cheek muscles, the result of too much blowing at wind instruments. We need only inquire to confirm. What instrument do you play, my man?"

The patient replied: "The big drum, doctor."



Sherry Toscano, left, practices a pulley exercise under the direction of YMCA and Pink Ribbon instructor Nancy Silva.

## Getting strong

Pilates-based program helps women regain range of motion after lumpectomies and mastectomies

By DIANE O'DONNELL / STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Helping breast cancer survivors improve their quality of life is something Pilates instructor Nancy Silva knows about firsthand. Her mom was diagnosed with the disease 20 years ago.



During the Pink Ribbon class, Pilates-based movements, such as the open elbows exercise, are used to help women stretch and strengthen the areas affected by their breast cancer surgeries.

"I went through it with her, all the pain, the anxiety, the frustration, the depression. I remember all of it," says Silva, a fitness coordinator for the YMCA in Eltingville. "It was so overwhelming for her and for me."

So in August, when Silva heard about a new Pink Ribbon certification program that uses Pilates-based exercises to help women regain range of motion after breast surgery, she signed up.

Physical recovery after breast cancer treatment is not always addressed by medical professionals, say program advocates.

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## Corner stretch



- Stand facing a corner with your elbows bent and arms reaching out to the two walls.
- Take a step or two back from the wall.
- Exhale and lean into the wall.
- Inhale and return to starting position.
- Repeat this exercise 3 to 4 times.

## Pulley



- Sit on a stability ball.
- Reach your right arm overhead and grasp the top of a pole with your right hand. Place your left arm behind your back and hold onto the bottom of the pole with your left hand.
- Inhale and slide the pole downward as far as possible.
- Exhale and move the pole upward as far as possible.
- Repeat 5 times.
- Switch hand positions and repeat 5 times on the opposite side.

## Arm scissors



- Lie face up with knees bent. Inhale and reach your arms to the ceiling, palms facing inward.
- Exhale, lower your arms and reach one directly overhead, while the other reaches toward the feet.
- Inhale and return to starting position.
- Switch arm positions and repeat.
- Do this exercise 3 to 4 times on each side.

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, WENDY RIGBY

## HEALTHY FIT

## Sunscreen protection is in question

A lawsuit charges sunscreen makers with exaggerating the protection their products offer against UVA rays. Coppertone maker Schering-Plough has "vigorously disputed" the charges. Other defendants include Hawaiian Tropic and Banana Boat. The American Academy of Dermatology warns not to stay in the sun long even when using sunscreen.



— THE WASHINGTON POST

## HEALTH

STRONG FROM PAGE B 1

## Get strong after breast cancer surgery

The Pink Ribbon program aims to help women regain strength and mobility in affected shoulders and arms, which can be compromised by scar tissue.

Another common effect of surgery is back pain, caused by a patient's tendency to slump over and hold the arm close to the body. The program seeks to combat that pain by lengthening the spine and engaging core muscles in Pilates exercises.

## ONE-ON-ONE CLASS

Since December, Silva, 47, has been working one-on-one with breast cancer patients at the South Shore YMCA in its Pink Ribbon program. A group class will launch next week.

During a recent Tuesday night, Silva was helping Sherry Toscano stretch the back of her triceps muscles.

Sitting atop a stability ball, Toscano, 54, who underwent a lumpectomy in July, grasps the top of a wooden pole behind her head with her left hand. Toscano's right hand reaches behind her back and grabs the bottom of the pole for resistance.

On inhalation she slides the pole down her back as far as possible.

"Fire into that scar tissue," urges Silva, as Toscano moves the pole upward on exhalation. The exercise is repeated five times before Toscano switches hand positions.

"This is where the lymph surgery was," says Toscano pointing to her right underarm, "and believe it or not it still is numb. It may always be numb."

After her lumpectomy, Toscano, like many women who've undergone breast surgery, was given the standard recommendation to stretch her arm and exercise the area.

"One of the problems for some physicians is that they don't have access to an exercise program for patients," says Dr. Heather McMullen, an attending surgeon at Staten Island University Hospital and director of its breast health partnership. The partnership offers no-cost mam-



Pink Ribbon instructor Nancy Silva, left, has Sherry Toscano perform an open chest stretch during her one-on-one session.

mographies, gynecological screenings and pap smears to uninsured and underinsured women.

Dr. McMullen provides exercise guidelines to her patients after surgery. She sends those who develop range of motion problems for physical therapy.

While Dr. McMullen couldn't comment on the exercise recommendations of other doctors, she conceded that such recovery plans are "probably not the standard."

## 3-PHASE PROGRAM

The Pink Ribbon program is broken into three phases, each building on the other and allowing for more range of motion. A typical individual session usually lasts about 30 to 45 minutes, because it can be very challenging.

"Basically it's how they feel. I go by feedback," says Silva. "On bad days we'll make it a very short session."

At the end of each session, Silva gives her clients detailed printouts of the workouts

they've performed so they can practice at home.

Therein lies the program's attraction for Toscano, a research specialist in the financial market who's been training with Silva since February.

"The best part about this is I can do it at home," says the Eltingville woman. "A ball, a band, a pole — you know, you don't need a lot."

The brainchild of New Jersey Pilates instructor and exercise physiologist Doreen Puglisi, the program grew out of her experience with clients who underwent breast surgery and were often times sent home with no plan for physical rehabilitation.

In 2002, she debuted her program, which uses movements first introduced by Joseph Pilates in the early 20th century to stretch and strengthen the shoulder, chest, back and core muscles.

Two years later, Puglisi was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a total mastectomy of her right breast.

"Probably in August (2004)

## Pink Ribbon program

This Pilates-based program helps women stretch and strengthen the shoulder, chest, back and abdominal muscles, which allows them to regain range of motion in those areas affected by breast cancer surgery.

## Where to do it

YMCA  
3939 Richmond Ave., Eltingville

## One-on-one session

\$45 per session for members  
\$55 per session for nonmembers

## Group class

Tuesday 6:45 to 7:30 p.m.  
(8 week class begins May 5)  
\$80 for members  
\$120 for nonmembers

## More information

718-227-3200

I started using my own program," says Puglisi by phone from her Fairfield, N.J.-based Pilates studio, "but now that I was actually going through it I was able to really fine tune it because I knew what it felt like."

Puglisi launched her Pink Ribbon certification program in June. To date, about 40 women, and some men, with backgrounds in physical therapy, chiropractics and Pilates have been certified nationwide. Over the next few months Puglisi will bring her training program to Ohio, Toronto and San Francisco.

The 48-year-old exercise aficionado says her own breast cancer experience was a turning point in her life.

"Ever since then I've kind of felt like it's my mission now to help other women," says Puglisi. "After you're through all your surgery and your treatment and everything like that, you're kind of left on your own and you realize there has to be something else."

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