



Pilates For Swimming

Swim with better control and faster times – without straining your body.

For swimmers, proper body alignment is critical. Swimmers need to work with the water and the slightest misalignment can cause them to work against it. Much of a swimmer's training, however, focuses on working the global muscles – or the outside musculature system. It does not work the inside 'stabilizing' system. This bilateral imbalance leaves a swimmer open to misalignments which make certain parts of the body work harder than they should. That can add seconds to a competitive time or – even worse – to a variety of tears, pulls or strains.





Why Pilates?

Pilates exercises focus on strengthening this inner support system which consists of the deep abdominal muscles, and the muscles closest to the spine. The exercises develop core control by integrating the trunk, pelvis and shoulder girdle. Pilates can teach swimmers how to activate their inner support system to attain maximum balance and alignment as well as correct muscle "firing" patterns. This means the muscles activate when they should, within the dynamic of a particular movement.

Swimmers will also see stronger stomach muscles, which are the base of all their movements. For a swimmer a strong core will keep scapula, shoulders, pelvis and spine balanced and aligned so that they can lift their arms up and out of the water without the usual straining of the neck muscles, leading to less overall wear and tear on the body and a faster swim. In addition, Pilates exercises are performed at a deliberate pace, with proper mind-body control. This approach translates well to the pool, where many swimmers need to concentrate less on how far they have gone and more on breathing, body orientation and balance for a steadier race.

Performance Benefits:

- Muscles fire correctly leading to more fluid movement
- Body is aligned, leading to less strain on the neck
- Proper mind body control leads to a steadier, faster pace
- All of the above equal faster times without the wear and tear



Pilates For Swimming - Featured Exercises

Swim with better control and faster times – without straining your body.

Single Leg Stretch

Starting Position

Sit on the mat with both legs pulled into the chest as if you have just finished Rolling Like a Ball. Place the inside hand on the knee and the outside hand on the ankle and roll down with control as the free leg straightens. Keep the leg at a height that allows the low back to remain stable. Keep the head up.

Movement Sequence

- **Exhale** – Release the leg held into the chest, straighten it out below you and pull the other leg in. Sink the abdominals as you bring the leg in, keep the elbows wide and the back steady.
- **Inhale** – Switch legs.

Modifications

Lower Body Only:

Support the head, neck and upper body with a C-shaper, wedge pillow or towels and work the lower body only.

Challenges

To challenge the abdominals, draw the leg in only until it forms a right angle with the hip and place the hands lightly on the leg rather than pulling it in toward the body.

Optimum Form

Keep the torso as still as possible, the head supported with minimal strain and the legs level with the eyes.



Transition

Bring both legs into the chest with the hands on the ankles for Double Leg Stretch.

Cueing and Imagery

- Keep the shoulders down and the elbows wide.
- Keep your torso still.

Imagine you are holding a glass of your favorite beverage on your abdomen and don't spill it.

- Pull the abdominals deeper in with every repetition.

Don't let the abdominals rise!

Purpose

- Develop pelvic stability and core control
- Strengthen the abdominals

Precautions

For neck and shoulder injuries – Use the modifications listed above.

For low back injuries – Work with an imprinted spine or use a supported neutral position



1 Single Leg Stretch – Starting Position – Left hand on the inside of the right knee. Right hand on the outside of the right ankle



2 Switch the leg and hand position



Single Leg Kicks

Starting Position

Lie prone with the head and torso lifted up, the forearms on the mat and the hands together. The legs are straight and as close together as possible. Press the forearms into the mat, slide the shoulders down the back and lift the torso up. Keep the head in line with the spine.

Movement Sequence

- **Inhale** – Bend one knee and pulse the heel toward the buttocks two times with a sniffing breath. Keep the heel in line with the sit bones and the hips in place. Don't point the toes out to the side as the leg comes in or let the front of the hips lift off the mat.
- **Exhale** – Extend the leg back to the floor reaching the leg out long.
- Repeat to the other side.
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Modifications

Prone Version: Lie prone with the head on the hands to decrease low back, neck and shoulder stress.

Challenges

Add pointing and flexing to the foot work to challenge coordination and memory.

Optimum Form

Shoulders are away from the ears, forearms are pressed into the mat with the shoulders wide. The abdominals are lifted up, low back curve is gentle and the heels kick straight into the buttocks without the toes turning out. The hips are perfectly still as the legs kick.



Transition

Lower the torso down to the mat with the head to one side and the hands behind the back to start the Double Leg Kicks.

Cueing and Imagery

- Keep the shoulders down and wide and the neck long throughout the exercise.
Press the forearms into the mat and the upper spine to the ceiling.
- Keep the head in line with the spine.
Focus the eyes a few inches in front of the hands.
- Keep the abdominals engaged throughout.
No sagging stomachs.
- Keep the spine as elongated as possible.
Imagine you are a baby pushing yourself up off the floor for the first time.
Imagine you are a turtle reaching its head out from inside its shell.
- Keep the lower leg in line with the thigh.
Imagine you have a spring attached from your buttock to your heel.

Purpose

- Strengthen serratus anterior
- Strengthen the hamstrings
- Stretch the quadriceps
- Strengthen back extensors, hamstrings and gluteals
- Improve scapular stability
- Teach axial elongation in extension
- Teach abdominal support in extension



Precautions

Low back injuries – Engage the abdominals and press the pubic bone into the mat to decrease the pressure on the lower back. If the client still gets a punching sensation in the lower back, lower the torso or avoid.

Knee problems – Limit the range of motion in knee flexion. Stretching the quadriceps before this exercise can be helpful at decreasing knee discomfort.



1 Single Leg Kick – Starting Position



2 Kick right heel in 2 times



3 Kick left heel in 2 times



Swimming

Starting Position

Lie prone on the mat with the arms reaching overhead and the legs straight.

Movement Sequence

- Reach one leg and the opposite arm out and up toward the ceiling. Switch the arm and leg quickly without losing the balance on the center of the torso.
- The breath can follow the tempo of the swimming for example inhale for two "strokes", exhale for two "strokes" or inhale for 4 "strokes" and exhale for 4 "strokes".

Modifications

Legs Only – Move just the arms or just the legs.

Challenges

Move as quickly as possible without losing the balance between the two sides.

Optimum Form

Even rhythm through all four limbs and a still center while moving quickly.



Cueing and Imagery

- Keep the center still as the limbs move.
Imagine you have a water glass on the small of your back.
- Don't spill it.
- Don't rock the hips from side to side.
- Reach the legs out first, then up.
Imagine your legs are reaching to the walls before lifting up.
- Keep the shoulders anchored into the back as the arms move.
Keep the neck long. Don't wear your shoulders like earrings.
- Keep the rhythm even through all four limbs.

Purpose

- Strengthen the back and hip extensors including the erector spinae, hamstrings and gluteus maximus
- Improve pelvic stability

Precautions

Low back injuries – Client must tolerate back extension or avoid.

Shoulder injuries – Lift the legs only.



11 Swimming – Lift the right arm and the left leg



12 Lift the left arm and the right leg



Suggested products for Swimmers

Pilates Arc®

Why is the Pilates Arc® a best-selling favourite? Because it's a versatile, lightweight, low-cost Step Barrel that is perfect for group classes, personal training or home use!

Never has anything so light packed such a punch. Although it weighs less than four pounds, the versatility of the Pilates Arc makes it a heavy hitter.

Three durable, lightweight exercise tools in one:

- An Exercise Arc. With a gentle curve on one side and a steeper curve on the other, its patented asymmetrical shape is extremely versatile for different uses and body types.
- A classic Spine Corrector. You'll appreciate the improved comfort and ergonomics - a gentler curve on the barrel and a more rounded step.
- A Wedge for your Balanced Body® Reformer. Slide it onto the shoulder rests, and use it to provide back support and stability for a variety of strength and mobility challenges. Especially useful during pregnancy.



Comes with free instruction booklet and 23-minute workout DVD, a \$39.95 value.





EXO® Chair

A great way to launch equipment-based Pilates group programming!

The EXO® Chair delivers a unique and fun, full-body workout. Add in a Functional Resistance Kit and you can push and pull! This gives you a host of new exercises not possible with any other chair - including many that could previously be done only on a Reformer - and offers a challenging cardio/aerobic workout. Great for group classes, personal training sessions and at home, for users of all levels.

Our **split pedal** option adds reciprocal and rotational movements for a more robust exercise repertoire. Includes dowel for conversion back to a single pedal.

The most compact, durable Pilates chair on the market, the EXO is also the easiest to store, with a 40% smaller footprint than competitive products when storing six chairs

- Designed for group programming: compact, durable and portable!
- Lightweight and easily carried and/or stacked by one person.
- Simple set-up, no assembly required.
- Comfortable, padded pedal; non-slip for maximum safety.
- Two springs (black/heavy), adjustable to 8 resistance settings.
- Spring changes are fast and safe with our Cactus Resistance System. Easy adjustments from front or back of chair, with easy-grip cloth tabs.





Pilates IQ® Reformer

The Pilates IQ® sets up in seconds, then stores away under a bed or upright in a closet. With its sleek design, professional features, easy storability, and affordable price, the Pilates IQ is perfect for home. This is the *only* reformer available that shortens for storage and still provides a smooth carriage ride with no seams on the track! Comes with free workout video or DVD. 2-year warranty for non-commercial use.



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