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Pilates for Running

Run faster and farther with less chance of injury.

Whether you're a competitive runner or weekend jogger trying to shed a few pounds, there's no doubt that running is an easy way to keep in great cardiovascular shape. But your body can take a beating - this is especially true if it develops asymmetries.

Body asymmetries develop because of poor body mechanics, causing certain muscles to become overused (a common trait in runners), while others become underused. This can result in a variety of ailments from lower back pain to hip bursitis to anterior knee problems. It can also lead to a wide variety of tears, strains and pulls.

Pilates exercises create a stronger, more flexible spine and core, and also promotes faster recovery from strains or injuries.





Why Pilates?

For a runner, posture is one of the key ingredients to success. And posture is very dependent on a strong core. Pilates develops a strong core by supporting and strengthening the muscles of the torso, hips shoulders and pelvis. These can eventually lead to a huge positive difference in your posture, technique, balance and stability. It enables you to focus on where your head and neck are in relation to the spine and pelvis, on down through the legs and toes. This all adds up to more efficient movement and less chance of injury.

Pilates exercises will:

- Build up the back muscles evenly
- Elongate and align the spine for better stability
- Expand the diaphragm
- Increase overall flexibility, strength, and balance
- Increase range of motion in hips and shoulders
- Enhance concentration through focused breathing
- Provide more upright running
- Help bodies recover faster from injuries



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Performance Benefits

A stronger and more stable core helps a runner:

- Run more efficiently uphill with a stabilized musculature
- Run more efficiently downhill with a stronger and more balanced sciatic area
- Experience less tightening of the neck, head and shoulders
- Increase oxygenation and stamina with a diaphragm that is able to fully expand
- Focus on proper movement with better kinaesthetic awareness
- Decrease fatigue because of less strain on the body
- Shave seconds off your times because you move more efficiently
- Run without pain!





Pilates For Running - Featured Exercises

Featured Mat Exercise for Runners - Side Leg Lifts

Benefit:

Increased strength in the lateral hip for improved alignment and injury prevention.

Starting Position

- **Standard version** – Lie on your side with the torso and head lined up along the back edge of the mat. Flex the hips slightly so the feet line up with the front edge of the mat. Support the head on the hand with the elbow on the mat and the other hand in front of the chest. Keep the shoulders and the hips stacked on top of each other and the spine straight. The bottom leg can be parallel or turned out with the bottom foot flexed and the toes tucked under.
- **Beginning version** – Place the head on the lower arm or on a pillow rather than supporting the head on the hand.
- **Advanced version** – Place the lower hand under the head and take the top hand off the floor and put it behind the head so you are balancing on the bottom elbow.



Movement Sequence

Exhale – Lift the top leg up toward the ceiling, creasing at the top of the femur without moving the top hip or shortening the waist. Keep the shoulders and hips stacked.

Inhale – Lower the top leg back to the bottom leg.

Modifications

For discomfort when lying on the greater trochanter: Try bending the bottom leg slightly, supporting the waist with a small towel or padding the hips to float the trochanter.

Challenges

Use the advanced arm position and change the tempo of the lift from even in both directions to slow up and fast down or fast up and slow down.

Optimum Form

The torso hips and shoulder do not change as the leg moves.



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Transition

Bring the top leg back to the starting position to go on to the next Side Leg exercise.

If you are changing sides, roll into the prone position with the arms overhead and slightly wider than the shoulders. Roll smoothly into position. Clap the inner thighs together quickly 20 times and roll onto the other side with control.

Cueing and Imagery

- Keep the shoulders and the hips lined up throughout the exercise.
 - Imagine you have a cup of coffee balanced on your shoulder. Don't spill it!
 - Imagine you have a stake through the hips and you can't break it.
- Keep the abdominals engaged.
 - Scoop the navel toward the spine as the leg goes up.
- Press the arm into the mat to keep the underside of the body engaged.
- Reach the leg away from the hip as it goes up.
 - Imagine you are painting a line on the wall.
 - Instructor cue, press into the client's heel.
 - Keep the waist long on the top side of the torso as the leg goes up.
- Lift the leg, not the hip.
 - Crease at the top of the femur not at the waist.



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Purpose

- Strengthen the hip abductors including the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, gluteus minimus and tensor fascia lata.
- Strengthen the hip external rotators including the gluteus maximus, piriformis, obturator internus and externus, gemellus inferior and superior and quadratus femoris.
- Strengthen the lateral torso including the latissimus dorsi, internal and external obliques and quadratus lumborum.
- Develop stability of the torso and pelvis in side lying.

Precautions

- **Neck, shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries:** Place the head on a pillow to decrease stress on the neck and upper limb.
- **Hip Injuries:** Modify as suggested for lateral hip pain. For anterior or joint pain, limit the range of motion and the number of repetitions or avoid if it is too uncomfortable.



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Featured Reformer Pilates Exercise for Runners - Single Leg Footwork

Benefit:

Overall improvement of alignment, flexibility and strength, all of which lead to an increase of speed and decrease the likelihood of injury.

Equipment Setup:

Springs: 2-4

Footbar: Any bar

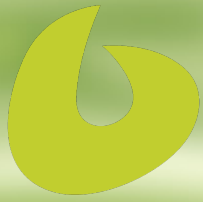
Straps: Regular/Long loop

Prerequisite:

Adequate hamstring flexibility, ability to stabilize the back, Hundreds on the mat.

Starting position

Lie supine on the carriage with the head on the headrest, the shoulders just below the shoulder rests and the foot on the footbar with the knee bent. The free leg is held in a tabletop position with the thigh at a right angle to the torso, the knee bent with the shin parallel to the carriage and the foot pointed. If working in external hip rotation (turn out), turn both legs out. Adjust the footbar as needed to create the correct starting position.



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Exercise Sequence

Exhale - Straighten the leg to push the footbar away. Keep the hips level, the low back neutral and the free leg in position.

Inhale - Return with control

Footwork Variations

Heels: Place the center of one heel on the footbar with the legs in parallel or turned out

Toes: Place the ball of the foot on the footbar with the heel slightly raised and the legs in parallel or turned out.

Prehensile: Wrap the ball of the foot around the footbar like you are trying to hold onto the bar with your foot. The heel is underneath the bar, the legs are parallel.

Tendon Stretch (Flex/releve): Place the ball of the foot on the footbar with the legs parallel. Push the carriage back by straightening the knee and rising onto the ball of the foot. Keeping the knee straight, lower the heel, raise the heel and bend the knee to return to the starting position.



Progressions Parallel: Place the ball of the foot on the footbar with the heel slightly raised and the legs in parallel. Place the toe of the free leg at the ankle with the knee bent. Push the carriage back by straightening the standing leg and extending the free leg up to the ceiling. Flex and point both feet and return to the starting position.

Progressions Turned-out: Place the ball of the foot on the footbar with the heel slightly raised and the legs turned out. Place the toe of the free leg at the ankle with the knee bent and the leg turned out. Push the carriage back by straightening the standing leg and extending the free leg up to the ceiling. Lower the free leg down to the bar and back up. Rotate the free leg out to the side without losing the stability of the pelvis. Flex and point both feet and return to the starting position.

Cueing

- Maintain a level pelvis while working on one leg.
 - *Reach the sit bone of the free leg toward the opposite heel*
 - *Keep equal weight on the back of both hips*
- Engage the abdominals as you press back
- Keep the standing hip, knee, ankle and foot in line
 - *Line up the inside of the hip bone (ASIS), the center of the knee cap, the middle of the ankle and the 2nd toe*



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- Maintain the same position of the back throughout the exercise
 - *Imagine you are holding a glass of water on your stomach. Don't spill it!*
 - *Place your hands under your waist and keep even pressure on your hands throughout the exercise*

Purpose

- Strengthen the leg muscles including the internal and external rotators, quadriceps, hamstrings, abductors, adductors, calf muscles and ankle stabilizers
- Balance the strength between the legs
- Teach lumbopelvic stability
- Correct hip, leg and ankle alignment
- Increase circulation

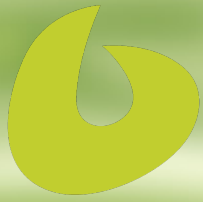


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Precautions

- **For knee, hip and ankle injuries and after knee or hip surgery** - Limit carriage return with footbar adjustments or stopper blocks. Avoid if symptoms increase.
- **For sensitive feet** - Pad the footbar or work with shoes on.
- **For low back, hip and sacroiliac joint injuries** - Support the low back with a towel, wedge or roll. Avoid if symptoms increase.
- **For neck and shoulder injuries** - Use sticky pads on the carriage and pad the shoulder rests to keep the shoulders from jamming into the shoulder rests.



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Suggested products for runners

Pilates Allegro® Reformer

The Allegro is the most versatile Reformer in the world, with over 26,750 in use. Tough, durable, yet portable and storable. You can fold it flat, stack it, or store it vertically. At just 48kgs, some teams wouldn't think of going on the road without it. No other equipment offers as much flexibility. Rolls, stacks and stores on end.

The Allegro expands with the Tower of Power to be a reformer, half-trapeze and a mat, all in one compact footprint that allows an extraordinary range of programming. Start with the full system, or with Allegro® Reformers you can add to later. It all retrofits!





Studio Reformer®

The smoothest, quietest ride on the market. Balanced Body's Pilates Studio Reformer® sets the standard in comfort and craftsmanship. With every edge sculpted and smooth, the Studio Reformer has sleek, clean lines-appealing to the eye and inviting to the touch.

For 30 years, the world's most respected Pilates instructors have used and recommended the Balanced Body® Pilates Studio Reformer. Built of solid Rock Maple, our Studio Reformer is the most smooth, quiet and durable machine on the market. Reformers we built 20 years ago are still hard at work today.





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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.



The Combo Chair

Designed to stretch and strengthen muscle groups not easily reached by more traditional techniques and equipment. Evolved from the Wunda Chair system, our padded split step adds the dimension of rotational and reciprocal movement of the extremities. And now we've added wheels to our Combo Chair for easy moving!.



Mats, Props and Accessories

Balanced Body® offers a complete array of top-quality accessories. For products listed here, Pilates workout videos / DVDs and books are available to help expand your exercise repertoire.

- Ultra-Fit Circle® and Flex Ring Toner®
- Mats, Foam Rollers and Fit Balls
- Balance Boards and Rotator Discs
- Exercise Bands
- Reformer Foot Plates / Jumpboards



This guide is brought to you by



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