

## Firmer Abs are Just One Benefit of a Pilates Workout

**Pilates benefits more than just your body and abs, it's a workout for your mind and soul as well.**

The promise of flatter, tighter abdominal muscles lures many people to their first Pilates class. What keeps them coming back? A sense of total well-being that comes from being more fit, flexible and balanced.



Pilates is a form of controlled exercise named after its founder, Joseph H. Pilates, who developed the practice in the 1920s to aid injured World War I veterans. It soon caught on with serious dancers looking to tone, strengthen and lengthen their bodies. Pilates, however, can be done by almost everyone, anywhere, which may be why it has become so popular today.

Through a series of precise movements, performed most commonly on a mat, Pilates enthusiasts can reshape their bodies, improve their posture and increase their strength. Each movement is designed to originate in the center or core of the body, which consists of the abdominal, gluteus maximus ("glutes"), inner thighs and back muscles.

### **Strengthen Your Core and Soothe Your Soul**

Proper form and focused breathing are essential to a good Pilates workout. When movements are coordinated with the breath, they become more effective and fewer repetitions are necessary to achieve desired results. What's more, deep breathing promotes a feeling of calm and helps to re-energize the mind, body and soul.

While Pilates can be performed exclusively on a mat, some people prefer a more varied workout using equipment such as exercise balls and resistance bands. Special Pilates machines are also quite popular and can be used at home as well as the gym.

Of course, with any new workout, it's a good idea to talk to your physician before you start. With Pilates, it's also important to begin your practice under the direction of a certified instructor. You will get much better results and reduce your risk of injury.