

The Popularity of Pilates

Optimizing movement and musculoskeletal function



With the patient on her hands and knees between exercise repetitions, the practitioner checks pelvic stability and lumbar spine alignment.

A Pilates program will invariably enhance strength, flexibility, muscular and postural symmetry, and provide safe and restorative exercise rehabilitation.

Dr. Vanessa Arnold, a 2002 graduate of the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, is a chiropractor and a certified Pilates instructor. As the clinic director of Body In Balance Chiropractic and Pilates Studio, she uses chiropractic care and Pilates-based exercise in the treatment of her patients. Dr. Arnold encourages her patients to play an active role in their health and wellness.

These days, the Pilates Method is gaining popularity among fitness enthusiasts, rehabilitation practitioners and people who are searching for an exercise experience that is challenging and invigorating for both the body and mind.

The Pilates Method primarily focuses on the body's core stabilizing muscles through slow, precise movements and specific breathing techniques. The aim is to achieve muscular balance, functional strength, increased joint mobility, improved posture, and ease and economy of movement. The rhythmic exercises, which are performed with only a few repetitions, promote elongated and toned musculature, and condition the deep core stabilizers of the spine, lower back and buttocks.

Originally developed by Joseph Pilates to help strengthen and rehabilitate immobilized soldiers during the First World War, this system has evolved and diversified for usage in exercise rehabilitation, sport conditioning and mainstream fitness, and with special populations.

Options become endless, as the more than 500 exercises done on the mat and with specialized equipment lend themselves to variation and modification. To be strengthened, muscles require resistance to their movement, and this is provided by gravity during mat work. On the Pilates equipment, springs create that resistance.

Given my perspective as both a Pilates instructor and a doctor of



Vanessa Arnold, DC



Dr. Vanessa Arnold supervises a patient on the Pilates Reformer, a piece of specialized equipment that provides variation to the floor mat exercises.

chiropractic, the focus in my studio is on the quality rather than the quantity of movement. It is not about feeling “the burn,” but nurturing a sense of respect for one’s body, and for patients to learn how their muscles and bones are supposed to function. My patients are thoroughly educated on breathing, alignment, and posture and how to find their “core” support. They discover that Pilates will become functionally integrated into their everyday lives. Whether the purpose is exercise rehabilitation or physical fitness, the goal of our sessions is to train the body for optimal movement and proper musculoskeletal function.

In my practice, there are typically two different scenarios: patients receiving chiropractic treatment who have not yet been introduced to what it means to play an active role in their own health and wellness; and those who start with the desire to keep their bodies fit and healthy through a Pilates-based program, and then realize they can benefit from chiropractic care as well. Eventually, I will suggest the Pilates Method to provide rehabilitation for various conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and whiplash-associated disorders. A Pilates program will invariably enhance strength, flexibility, muscular and postural symmetry, and provide safe and restorative exercise rehabilitation.

In conjunction with chiropractic care, Pilates facilitates individualized exercise programs that can be structured to the patient’s needs. For athletes, the benefits lie in better function without a high risk of injury. For purposes of exercise rehabilitation, Pilates targets core stabilization, muscular balance, flexibility, and neuromuscular conditioning.

From my perspective, most patients find the effects of Pilates to be so profound that they continue using it for total body conditioning even after moving on to a mainstream fitness regimen. ●