

Pilates and yoga - health benefits

Pilates is a non-aerobic method of exercising that lengthens and stretches all the major muscle groups in the body in a balanced fashion. Yoga brings the body and mind together and is built on three main structures – exercise, breathing and meditation. Both yoga and Pilates improve muscular and postural strength.

Pilates

Pilates is a non-aerobic method of exercising that lengthens and stretches all the major muscle groups in the body in a balanced fashion. It requires concentration in finding a centre point to control the body through movement. Each exercise has a prescribed placement rhythm and breathing pattern.

Muscles are never worked to exhaustion, so there is no sweating or straining, just intense concentration. The workout consists of a variety of exercise sequences that are performed in low repetitions, usually 5–10 times, over a session of one and a quarter to one and a half hours. Mat work and specialised equipment for resistance is used.

The Pilates method is taught on an individual basis and exercises are regularly re-evaluated to ensure they are right for each individual. Due to the individual attention given, this method suits everybody from elite athletes to people with limited mobility, pregnant women and people with low fitness levels.

Classes are held in specialised Pilates studios, physiotherapy clinics or at your local leisure facility or community centre.

Yoga

The classical techniques of yoga date back more than 5,000 years. The practice of yoga encourages effort, intelligence, accuracy, thoroughness, commitment and dedication.

The word yoga means 'to join or yoke together'. It brings the body and mind together and is built on three main structures – exercise, breathing and meditation.

The exercises of yoga are designed to put pressure on the glandular systems of the body, thereby increasing its efficiency and total health. Breathing techniques performed during yoga increase breath control to improve the health and function of body and mind. The two systems of exercise and breathing prepare the body and mind for meditation, with an approach to a quiet mind that allows silence and healing from everyday stress. When practiced regularly, yoga can become a powerful and sophisticated discipline for achieving physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

There are many various forms of yoga, each with its own emphasis. The most popular forms of yoga are Ananda (Hatha), Bikram, Iyengar and Sivananda.

Classes usually have 10–20 participants, allowing individual attention.

Pilates health benefits

The health benefits of Pilates include:

- Improved muscle strength and tone
- Increased flexibility and strength of the abdominals and back (core strength)
- Improved posture and rehabilitation or prevention of injuries related to muscle imbalances
- Increased lung capacity and circulation through deep breathing
- Improved concentration
- Increased body awareness
- Stress management and relaxation.

Yoga health benefits

The practice of yoga asanas (postures) develops strength and flexibility, while soothing the nerves and calming the mind. The asanas affect the muscles, joints and skin, and the whole human body – glands, nerves, internal organs, bones, respiration and the brain. The benefits of yoga include:

- Improved muscular and postural strength
- Increased flexibility of the muscles and joints
- Reduced fatigue
- Reduced pain and muscle stiffness
- Enhanced ability to concentrate
- Improved energy levels and ability to cope with stress.

Where to get help

- Your local council
- Pilates studios, physiotherapy clinics, local leisure facility or community centre
- Yoga studios, local leisure or community centre
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777
- 'Go for your life' Infoline Tel. 1300 739 899

Things to remember

- See your doctor for a check-up to assess your fitness level.
- Pilates is a safe and effective method of rehabilitation and focuses on muscular balance.
- Breathing techniques performed during yoga increase breath control to improve the health and function of both body and mind.
- Both yoga and Pilates improve muscular and postural strength.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Smartplay

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