

Health

Exercise by Pilates

by Omar Ocampo

Do you want to look and feel good—get stronger—but without the bulky muscles associated with traditional weight lifting?

There's an exercise system that promises to do just that.

It's called Pilates, named after a German, Joseph Pilates, who invented the system in the 1920s.

The unusual thing about Pilates is that the majority of the exercises are done—get this—lying down.

"The objective of this system is to be able to get the most benefit with the least effort," says local fitness trainer Julian Littleford, "And to get the most results with the least effort."

In due time, thighs will slim down, the bottom will lift up and the chest

will open, he says.

Pilates is a body alignment program that utilizes springs for resistance. It makes the exercises challenging, but without heavy impact on joints.

Exercising with weights only focuses on isolated muscle groups, as opposed to exercise by Pilates. "With weights, it's very difficult to change the body as a whole," says Littleford. Littleford says Pilates' springs allow a person to work with gravity, instead of against it.

Here's his example: a person could be pushing four springs (about 40 pounds resistance each) plus the Carriage and his or her weight.

A Carriage, technically called "Reformer," is one of two machines that Pilates trainees use. It looks similar to a four-poster bed. It runs forwards and backwards with springs attached to one end. A person can do about 300 exercises on this one piece of equipment.

The benefit of lying down is that a person is able to strengthen those muscles that are needed to keep the skeleton aligned while in a position with no gravity. Then when that person stands up, technically he or she should be strong enough to support his own

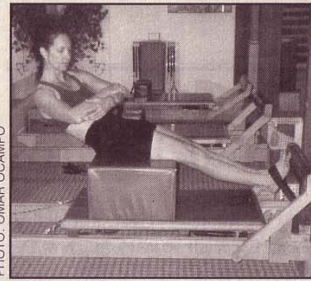


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Working on her reps, this woman uses the reformer weight, plus the additional weight from the work out (Carriage + resistance).

The second piece of equipment is called a Trap Table, or its common nickname "Cadillac" (because it is humongous).

Most of the people that come to see Littleford have an injury—everything from knee or back problems to hip replacements. Emphasis is placed differently with each person who solicits Pilates exercises. "Someone coming from childbirth is not going to have the same emphasis as somebody who has had surgery," Littleford says.

Each session is an hour long and, "You'll see a physical change in 10 sessions," Littleford assures. "Whether it be a strength change, or if you come with a physical problem, your pain should start to deteriorate."

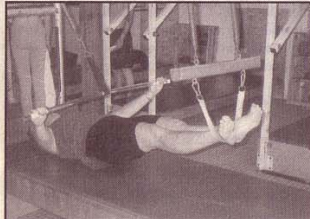


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Trap door, or as patrons call it, the "Cadillac" because of its large size