

DIARY OF A SELF-HELP ADDICT

5 PILATES EXERCISES FOR BEGINNERS

5 SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE PILATES MAT EXERCISES
YOU CAN DO AT HOME EVERY DAY.





Head Roll Up

A fundamental Pilates exercise that warms up the neck, upper abdominal muscles and upper back.

- Begin by lying on your back.
- Inhale to prepare.
- Exhale as you gently lift your head, neck, shoulders and arms off the mat.
- Gaze toward your knees and reach your fingertips beyond your hips.
- Hold for a few seconds.
- Finally, inhale as you return to start position.
- Repeat this 5 to 10 times.

Pro Tip: Keep your shoulders away from your ears and your tailbone heavy on the mat as you lift.



Pelvic Lift

A fundamental Pilates mat exercise that warms up the lower body including the legs, hips, low back and abs.

- Begin by lying on your back.
- Inhale to prepare.
- Gently press your feet and arms into the floor.
- Engage your pelvic floor muscles.
- Exhale as you sequentially roll the hips and spine up into a bridge position.
- Inhale while the hips are lifted.
- Finally, exhale as you soften behind your heart and roll the spine down one vertebrae at a time.
- Repeat 5-10 times.

Pro Tip: Engaging your pelvic floor muscles will help you avoid cramping in the hamstrings.



Toe Touches

This exercise helps improve core strength, pelvic stability and hip joint mobility.

- Begin by lying on your back with your legs in table-top position.
- Inhale to prepare.
- Exhale as you lower your right foot towards the floor, keeping a 90-degree bend in the knee. Left leg remains still.
- Inhale and return the leg to table-top position.
- Exhale as you lower the left leg towards the floor, keeping a 90-degree bend in the knee. Right leg remains still.
- Inhale and return the leg to table-top position.
- Continue to alternate toe touches for 10-20 repetitions.

Pro Tip: Press your navel to your spine as you lower the leg to avoid anteriorly tilting the pelvis which can cause the low back to arch. Also keep the head and neck relaxed.



Basic Swan

This exercise improves spinal extension, spinal mobility and posture. It's also a great stretch for the chest and abdominal muscles.

- Begin by lying face down (prone) on the mat, arms bent and hands near your shoulders.
- With legs hips width apart, gently press your pubic bone into the floor to engage the glutes and to protect your low back.
- Inhale as you lift the head and spine up until you're resting on your forearms.
- Gaze approximately 3-feet out in front of you on the floor to prevent the neck from hyper-extending.
- Exhale as you lower down to start position.
- Repeat 5-10 times.

Pro Tip: Draw the shoulder blades down your back as you lift to prevent hiking them to your ears. Also, engage your abdominal muscles as you lift so they aren't "hanging" to the floor.



Banana

This beginner side-lying exercise helps to strengthen the sides of the waist and hip/leg muscles. It also improves body awareness and alignment.

- Begin lying on your side.
- Rest your head on your bottom arm or a yoga block.
- Place your top hand in front of your mid-section on the floor.
- Inhale as you lift both legs up and off the floor approximately 12 inches.
- Keep the legs squeezed together.
- Exhale as you lower the legs to start position.
- Repeat 8-10 times on both sides.

Pro Tip: Keep your top shoulder away from your ear. Also maintain the navel to the spine to stabilize the low back and pelvis.

*Disclaimer: Always consult a physician or health care professional before participating in or performing any exercises or fitness classes for your own safety. Consulting a health care provider is advised to determine if this is right for your physical condition and needs. By participating in these exercises, you are performing them at your own risk.