

# Could PILATES Change Your Life?

Give yourself a workout without breaking a sweat and achieve a fitter, stronger and slimmer body, too. It's all in the power of Pilates...

**P**ilates may have been a foreign word to us a few years ago, but it's becoming incredibly popular because it's so good for building the deep abdominal muscles which affect almost every movement we make. When they are strong, they work as a natural corset, so there's less pressure on your back. This makes everything, from grocery shopping to reaching and lifting easier.

According to instructor Linda Riley, Pilates helps to improve circulation, balance, co-ordination, relieve stress, tension, aches and pains, build muscle tone and flexibility, improve posture and rebalances muscles around the joints to ease pressure.

Pilates is especially good for older women as it's easy on the joints. As we get older, our spines become less flexible. Pilates builds flexibility making our bodies seem younger and less prone to injury.



## "It makes you stronger and more confident"

Linda Riley, an instructor based in Oxfordshire, has been doing Pilates for more than 10 years. She says, "I qualified as a fitness instructor four years ago and then specialised in Pilates. It helps older people build body confidence and is a stepping stone to a fitter and healthier lifestyle."

"Boosting core strength affects the whole body because you can be stronger in your daily life. It's not just about doing a Pilates class for one or two hours a week."

Sometimes people are too nervous to come to a class but you could get a packet of red dot stickers and stick them around your home as reminders. When you're in your car, brushing your teeth, or pushing a supermarket trolley, gently tighten your abdominal muscles by drawing the naval

towards the spine and stand that little bit taller. Pilates is suitable for all healthy adults whether they're new to exercise or more experienced."

Linda teaches Pilates in Oxfordshire and at Well-Being Breaks across Europe. Find out more at [www.well-being-breaks.com](http://www.well-being-breaks.com) or ☎ 01865 820019 To find a STOTT-PILATES instructor in your local area, ☎ 01865 840893



## "It helped my backache and toned my tummy"

Jackie Abrahams, 45, started doing Pilates a year ago. She was drawn to it because she had injured her back and neck.

"It has really helped," says Jackie. "And it keeps the joints young and supple, too."

She originally started doing some stretches on her own but found classes more helpful. Jackie gets on really well with her instructor, Sarah, and finds that this keeps her motivated to keep coming to the class.

"I did stop for two months over

the summer and it may be a coincidence, but my backache came back. When I started

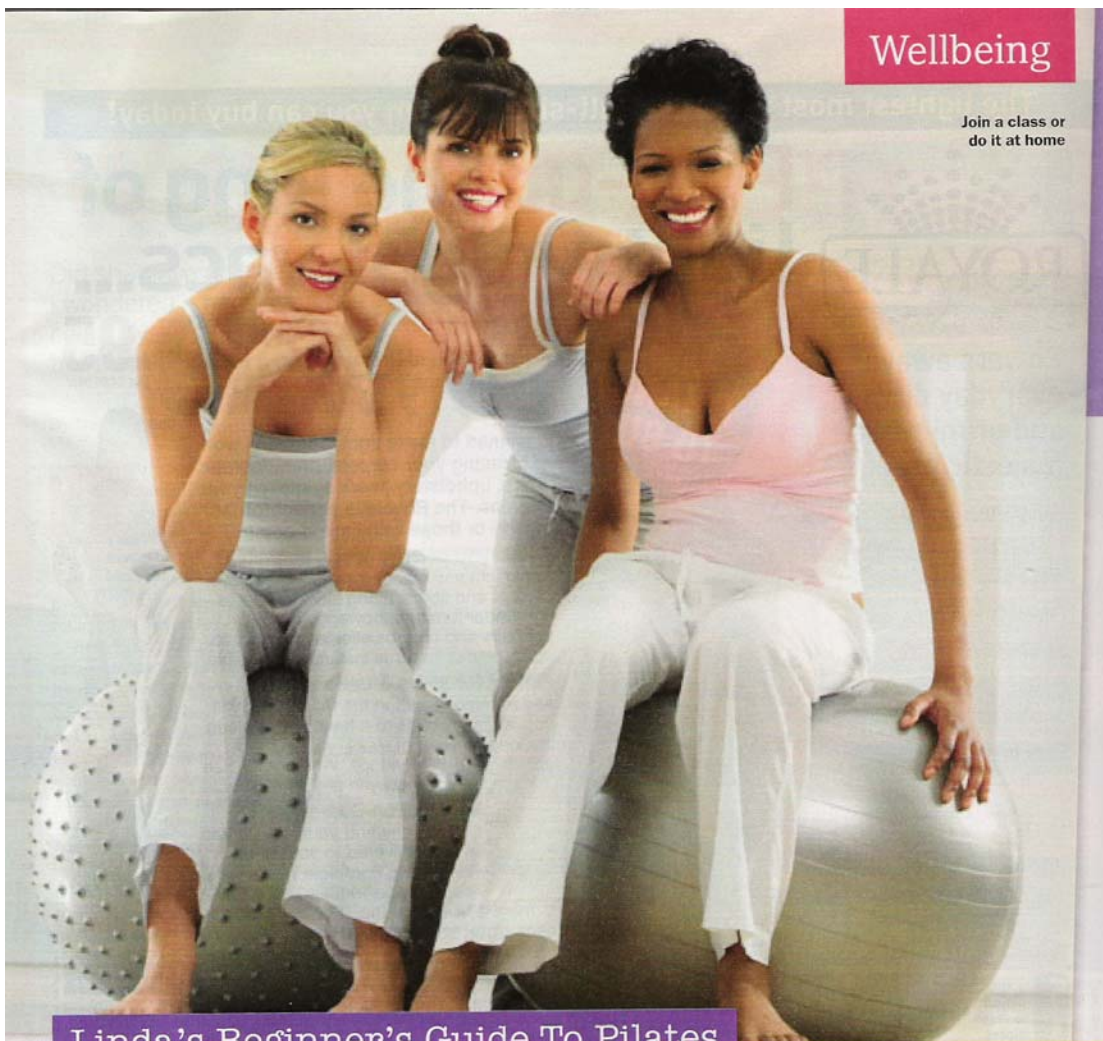
Pilates again, it got better."

Jackie says she'd advise anyone who has never tried Pilates to give it a go.

"Pilates is fine for beginners. Don't get put off if it's hard at first." As well as benefiting her back and shoulders, Jackie has also noticed that her stomach and pelvic floor muscles are much firmer, even though she's had children.



Join a class or  
do it at home



## Linda's Beginner's Guide To Pilates

**EASY STARTER** Lie down, back flat on the floor and lift legs to a tabletop position, tuck in the chin slightly and tighten the abdominals, lifting your upper body. Stretch your hands along your sides. Breathe in five "sniffs", raising your arms gently up and down with every breath. Breathe out with five puffs, raising your arms in time. Repeat as often as you can manage. Slowly lower your upper body then your arms and legs.



**THE HALF-ROLL BACK** Seated on a mat, bend your knees, tighten your abdominals and roll your upper body forward, lifting your arms at shoulder height. Breathing out, pull in your stomach muscles and roll back as far as you can. Keep the spine curved and feet flat on the floor. Breathe in and, with abdominals engaged, bring the upper body back over the legs. Repeat 5-8 times.



**THE SHOULDER BRIDGE** Lie on your back with feet hip distance apart and a relaxed spine. Breathing out, squeeze your buttocks and lift hips off the mat into a bridge position. Make one long straight line from shoulders to knees without arching the back. Feel your weight between the shoulder blades, not on the neck. Breathe in and hold. Breathe out, lowering your hips back down, keeping the spine relaxed. Repeat 3-5 times.

