



An INTRODUCTION to **FITNESS PILATES** By *Liz Guillon*

What is Pilates?

A method of exercise and physical movement designed to improve flexibility, strengthen muscles and balance the mechanics of the body by working on posture, in particular, promoting a healthier back and stronger abdominal muscles. It is also used and recommended by physiotherapists.

Is Pilates just another fad? No; Pilates has been around since the early 1900's, named after its inventor, Joseph Pilates, born in 1880. He was still teaching right up to his untimely demise at the ripe old age of 86.

Principles

- 1. Concentration** – fully focus on each movement to get the most value from it.
- 2. Breathing** – correct breathing ensures a good flow of oxygen to the working muscles. Also aids smooth and fluid movement.
- 3. Relaxation** – as you relax you will think about how your body feels and by recognising any tension, you can work to release any stress.
- 4. Alignment & Quality** – correct alignment of the body and quality of movement is important, and mastering the correct techniques is the key to achieving results.
- 5. Flow & Co-ordination** – all Pilates exercises should be performed in a slow, continuous movement to achieve co-ordination and flow.
- 6. Awareness** – you will realise your body's weaknesses and this will help you to work and improve on them. We are only as strong as our weakest link!

Benefits

- **Increased strength – particularly back and abdominals**
- **Increased flexibility**
- **Improved posture**
- **Increased body tone & bone density**
- **Improved balance and control of body**
- **Improved ease, grace and co-ordination of movement**
- **Heightened sense of well being and body awareness**

What Pilates Is Not

Pilates is not Aerobics, Yoga or Body Building and is not associated with any of these 3 things. It is a complete and unique fitness element in its own right, with its own set of unique benefits.