

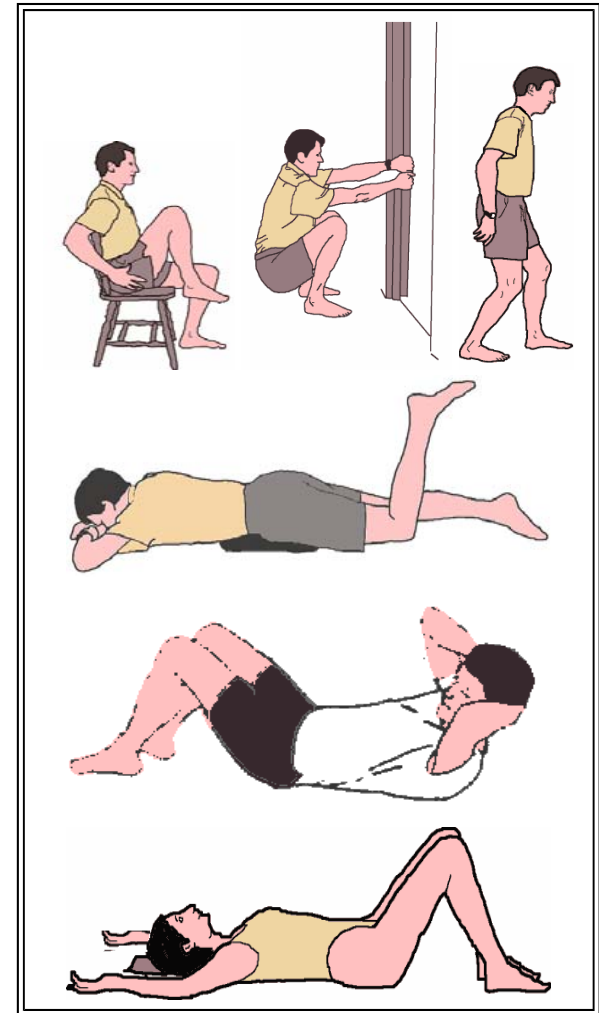
The Back Maintenance Manual (1): Pilates Exercises for Low Back Pain

(Sample 4 of 6 free Samples)

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The Problem with traditional Mat Pilates...

I first resorted to traditional Pilates Mat Exercises as a result of back and buttock muscle pain. I found it both beneficial and not beneficial.

Traditional Mat Pilates was very beneficial in that:-

- It quickly strengthened my abdominal muscles,
- It introduced me to "Posture-Movement Awareness", & especially the concept of "strong middle range" for my lower back and pelvis.
- It revealed to me - via a whole host of new and unfamiliar movement patterns - some very "tight weak" muscles that I had previously been only vaguely aware of. (The first step in healing a problem is knowing that you have a problem)!

Traditional Mat Pilates was not so beneficial in that:-

- It heightened my natural tendency to pain upon lumbar flexion:
 - I'd get occasional twinges of pain upon bending forward to pick something up.
 - I got a very sore back when I fell backwards on my tail bone and jarred my back into lumbar flexion.
- It encouraged my right femur to glide forward in the hip joint socket (an alarming and audible "clunk" and dull anterior groin ache) - so called "Iliopsoas bursitis"(see Refs. 12 and 51).

Pilates Mat Work alone is not enough...

The best answer to the deficiencies of Mat Work is supervised exercise on Pilates Studio Equipment...

My tendency to pain upon lumbar flexion needed some supervised Barrel-Ladder work...

The Barrel Ladder...



Femoral anterior glide is fixable with the right knowledge & equipment...

The Reformer...



The Cadillac...



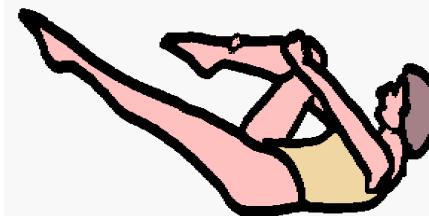
But living in small town New Zealand meant that Pilates Equipment based workouts were not an option. I was more or less left to my own resources!

Enter "Evolved Pilates"

So what was my solution? - I did in depth research into "Posture Movement Awareness" based upon the ground breaking work of FM Alexander and Shirley Sahrmann, and developed and tested a set of standing and sitting exercises to compliment traditional "Pilates on the Mat" . It worked for me, and will likely work for you!

Traditional Pilates:

The Single Leg Stretch, a great abdominal workout.



Evolved Pilates:

The Seated Knee Raise - when performed correctly, bulks up the iliopsoas muscles and prevents femoral anterior glide. (and stops the clunk in my aching hip joint! - see refs. 12, 51)



The Relaxation Exercise: Start

1. Lie in the Relaxation Position (see diagram). Use a comfortable mat or carpet.
2. Support your head with a folded up towel or bath mat, about 3 cm thick.
3. Keep your feet and knees in line with your hips, or a little wider if that is more comfortable.
4. Place hands on abdomen (see diagram) Take a deep breath, hold, then release it slowly.

Relaxation Exercise: Position



The Relaxation Exercise: Action

1. (Breathing In): Raise your shoulders toward your ears.
2. (Breathing out): Lower your shoulders towards your hips.
3. (Breathing normally): Let your shoulders totally relax.
4. Feel your body widen and lengthen.
5. Imagine sand trickling out of your back pockets.
6. Imagine sand trickling out from double pockets on your shirt
7. Imagine sand trickling from the middle of the back of your neck.
8. Say quietly to yourself: "There is no tension from my toes.... to my tail bone... to the frown on my forehead.
9. Repeat the relaxation exercise as often as you need to to get the relaxation to occur. Get to know and enjoy the feeling!

What the Relaxation Exercise Does:

- Provides a quick and simple relaxation script that can be applied anywhere.
- Teaches "posture-movement awareness". By doing a relaxation exercise, you are learn to feel the patterns of muscle tension in the body, and also the feel of relaxation from tension.

Comment on Relaxation Techniques

Doing nothing seems a strange way to learn a new exercise program! Nevertheless, you need a relaxation technique! You need to "not do" what is bad and to "do" what is good. "Doing" inappropriate muscle tension - whether during rest or while in movement - is definitely bad! Thus a relaxation technique is the first thing you should apply before any exercise! Indeed you should apply a quick relaxation technique before and during each and every movement during the day!

(Attention: does not replace the advice of a medical specialist - Refer "Back Pain Red Flags", page 55).

The Alexander Technique, and "Inhibiting".

"Inhibiting" is pausing to apply a relaxation script at the precise moment that you are likely to tense up. It's that simple. Take the example of a snooker champion just before hitting the ball. He pauses just at the moment of play. He "inhibits" unnecessary tension by use of a tried and trusted relaxation script. (He might use the relaxation exercises described above, because they can be done standing), thus:

- He "inhibits" unnecessary tension.
- His mind and body tune into each other. This is "posture-movement awareness".

He is now ready to do his (Alexander style) "Ordering": those quiet mind to body instructions. For example, he thinks to himself: "Bend at the hips... to achieve alignment of pocket.. with target ball.. with white ball ... with que ... with eye ..." You get the picture!

This page introduces you to "inhibiting", or "relaxation at rest and in action". The author makes no claim to have the best "relaxation script", but suggests you purchase a copy of John Sarno's book (52) .

Further Reading:-

1. See: References 5,48, 52

Pelvic Neutral: Start

1. Lie down and relax in the Relaxation Position ([see page 9](#)).

Before we can find "Pelvic Neutral", we need to explore the full range of pelvic tilt.

Pelvic Neutral: Action

Caution! Do not push your pelvic tilt beyond the level of mild discomfort! The first thing we are going to do is explore the full range of pelvic tilt.

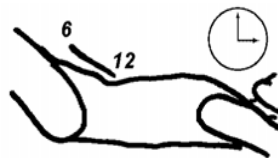
1. Imagine there is a clock face attached to the front of your pelvis and looking up to the ceiling.
2. Make your clock face "look upward" toward your head by tilting your pelvis so that 6 o'clock is higher than 12 o'clock. Hold, and take a couple of shallow breathes.
3. Now make your pelvic clock face "look downward" toward your knees by tilting your pelvis so that 6 o'clock is below 12 o'clock. Hold and take a couple of shallow breathes.
4. Now come back to the centre of your pelvic range of movement. You should still have a small natural arch in your back (not quite enough to get your fingers under). Relax, and get the feel of pelvic neutral into your mind!

The "pelvic clock face" is now looking straight ahead. This is Pelvic Neutral!

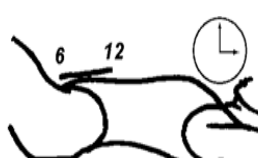
(1) Relaxation Position



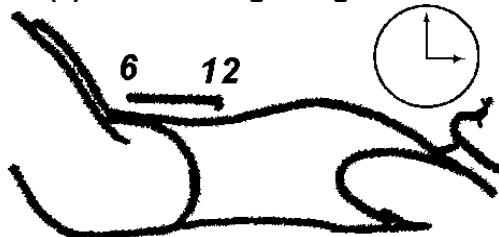
(2) Clock Looking toward 12



(3) Clock looking toward 6



(4) Clock looking straight ahead



(Attention: does not replace the advice of a medical specialist - Refer "Back Pain Red Flags", page 55).

What it does:

- Places the joint between the hips and the spine (lumbo-sacral joint) at its mid-point.
- Teaches the feel of pelvic neutral.

Comment

- This is the first of the pelvic alignment exercises!
- The lumbo-sacral joint is one of the most vulnerable joints in the body. 50% of lumbar disc herniations occur at this point!
- All joints are strongest and least prone to damage at or around their "mid-point". The lumbo-sacral joint is no exception to this rule!

You and your body do not automatically know a joint's strong middle point, but they can be taught!

Note: an alternative to the "Pelvic Clock Face" is the "Compass" - tilting toward the North (i.e. toward 12 o'clock and tilting toward the South (i.e. toward 6 o'clock).

Further Reading:-

1. See: Reference 5