

Should Men Do Pilates?

In this article Rachel Gaffey, Wellbeing Consultant at Tara Wellbeing Studio examines the benefits of Pilates for men.



What is Pilates?

Pilates focuses on building strength in the deep muscles of the abdominal region, the body's core. Pilates builds strength without excess bulk, creating a toned body and a flat abdomen.

Is [Pilates](#) useful for men?

Despite the explosive growth of Pilates in recent years, there seems to be a misconception among men that Pilates is only for women. Although women have been the first to adopt it in masses, Pilates is just as beneficial for men as it is for women. Pilates was developed by a man who was a boxer, gymnast, and circus performer and had a following of male practitioners.

When men try Pilates for the first time they are surprised to find out that Pilates is not easy. Pilates has been a training vehicle for elite athletes, both men and women, for over 50 years.

Athletes including Tiger Woods, The All Blacks and David Beckham regularly include Pilates in their fitness regimes. Strengthening the core of the body helps athletes better their game of choice as well as help them to lessen their risk of injury by teaching them how to stabilize around all of the joints in the body. Many athletes also use Pilates as part of their rehabilitation process.

What are the Benefits of Pilates:

- Improved posture
- Relief from back pain

- Longer, leaner muscles
- Increases core strength, stability and peripheral mobility
- Helps prevent injury
- Enhances functional fitness, ease of movement
- Increase your strength and stamina without adding muscle bulk
- Pilates can help prevent osteoporosis
- Improve your balance and co-ordination
- A great way to relax and beat stress
- No pain, plenty gain!

Why Men need Pilates?

Many physiotherapists, doctors and sport coaches agree that based on men's biomechanical and physical needs they could benefit from Pilates more than women.

The reasons are simple;

- As boys, men start training in sports earlier than girls and due to poor training practices at a young age, they don't develop core strength and correct exercise habits. Through time, this can result in back pain and inflexibility, especially in the hamstrings.
- Generally men don't stretch after an activity and if they do they do, it can be incomplete. Over time they develop microscopic tears in the muscles. With time scar tissue develops and when the muscle is fatigued it loses flexibility.

The Pilates method combining core strengthening and stretching principles is a great way to regain flexibility and treat many injuries, misalignments and bad habits.

How Pilates Helps men?

Pilates is an excellent technique for whole-body fitness, it provides [core](#) strength, flexibility and balance. These are all highly relevant to men's fitness, sports performance and injury prevention.

Pilates integrates several parts of the body during each exercise and this can be especially beneficial for men, whose workouts often emphasize a part-by-part approach to muscular development, such as what finds in weightlifting.

Pilates movements all come from the centre of the body, this develops core strength in the deep muscles of the centre to stabilize the trunk and protect the back.

Tips for Men Who Wish to Start Pilates

1. Join a Pilates class. There are several mixed classes where generally the women outnumber men or men only classes are also available in certain Pilates/Yoga studios.
- 1 You won't need to bring much with you to the Pilates class. The studio usually provides any equipment that might be needed for the workout. Many people like to work out on their own mat.
- 2 Wear loose comfortable clothing that allows you move and stretch fully.
- 3 Most studios/classes will allow you to attend class on a drop in (pay by the class) basis. Try this for your first session to see if you like the class, the environment and the teacher.
- 4 There is nothing specifically different about Pilates training for men, especially in the beginning. The Pilates method is the same for all.
- 5 Men might find that their muscles are a little tighter than womens', especially in the hips and hamstrings, but exercises can be easily modified to allow those areas to stretch out gradually.

For more information on Pilates for men or women, please visit www.mywellbeing.ie or email Rachel@mywellbeing.ie