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SHAPE

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Pilates, a Quiet

FITNESS FORMULA FOR THE FUTURE.

Bye bye burn, hello balance. Welcome to fitness in the 21st century. For a sneak preview, let us take you to planet Pilates, a brave new workout world where muscles streamline ballerina-lean, where body meets mind and moving is mellow. If you haven't yet run across Pilates, rest assured, it's coming to a studio near you.

"Fifteen years ago there were a couple of people teaching Pilates in Los Angeles and a couple in New York," says Ken Endelman, whose company, Current Concepts, is the primary manufacturer of the equipment. "Now there are about 100 studios across the country and 200 additional personal trainers who are using the system."

In response to the growth of interest, the Institute for the Pilates Method has just opened its doors in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is working to provide the first certification program for instructors.

Walk into a Pilates studio and you'll see a bedlike apparatus whose carriage slides back and forth. It has a pair of looped straps for your arms or legs and adjustable springs that provide resistance. This is the Universal Reformer, the Pilates centerpiece

on which you can perform hundreds of exercises lying down, sitting up, standing, kneeling, piking, even jumping.

The instructor will start you out on the Reformer or give you basic Pilates exercises on the mat. Either way, you focus on alignment and breathing, learning to engage your whole body in each motion rather than chopping it up into a patchwork of problem parts.

Nothing is forced or repetitious; the exercises flow and you feel the muscles kneaded long like taffy in a pull. Because the emphasis is on working correctly—as opposed to counting repetitions and adding weights—Pilates is usually done one-on-one or closely supervised.

As you progress you may notice your body take on more elongated muscle definition. "I haven't lost weight," says Olympic diver Wendy Williams, who does Pilates three times a week, "but everything seems to have really lengthened out."

THE LEAN MACHINE

Actually, the method was invented back in the early 1900s by German athlete Joseph Pilates, but it was only recently discovered by the world at large. Way ahead of his time, Pilates designed a series of mat exercises to help balance the body, improve ease of motion and promote mental and physical harmony.

Later, while working as a nurse during World War I, he experimented on hospital patients by attaching springs to their beds so they could start exercising even before they were able to get up. His discoveries led him to invent the Universal Reformer and other apparatus that augment his conditioning principles.

For many years Joe Pilates was the underground secret of the dance world. Notables such as George Balanchine, Martha Graham and Suzanne Farrell frequented his New York studio, attracted to a workout that built strength

without adding bulk or tightening muscles. Slowly the word spread and all sorts of athletes—Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert, even members of the San Francisco 49ers and Cincinnati Bengals—turned to Pilates for that extra edge.

The technique is so healthy for the body that sports medicine clinics and physical therapists have begun using it to rehabilitate patients. "It's easy to adjust the apparatus and modify the exercises so that someone who is injured—even a person with her leg in a cast—can continue to exercise," says Elizabeth J. Larkam. She's director of Dancemedicine Rehabilitation at the Center for Sports Medicine at St. Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco, where they've used Pilates for eight years to treat all kinds of physically active people.

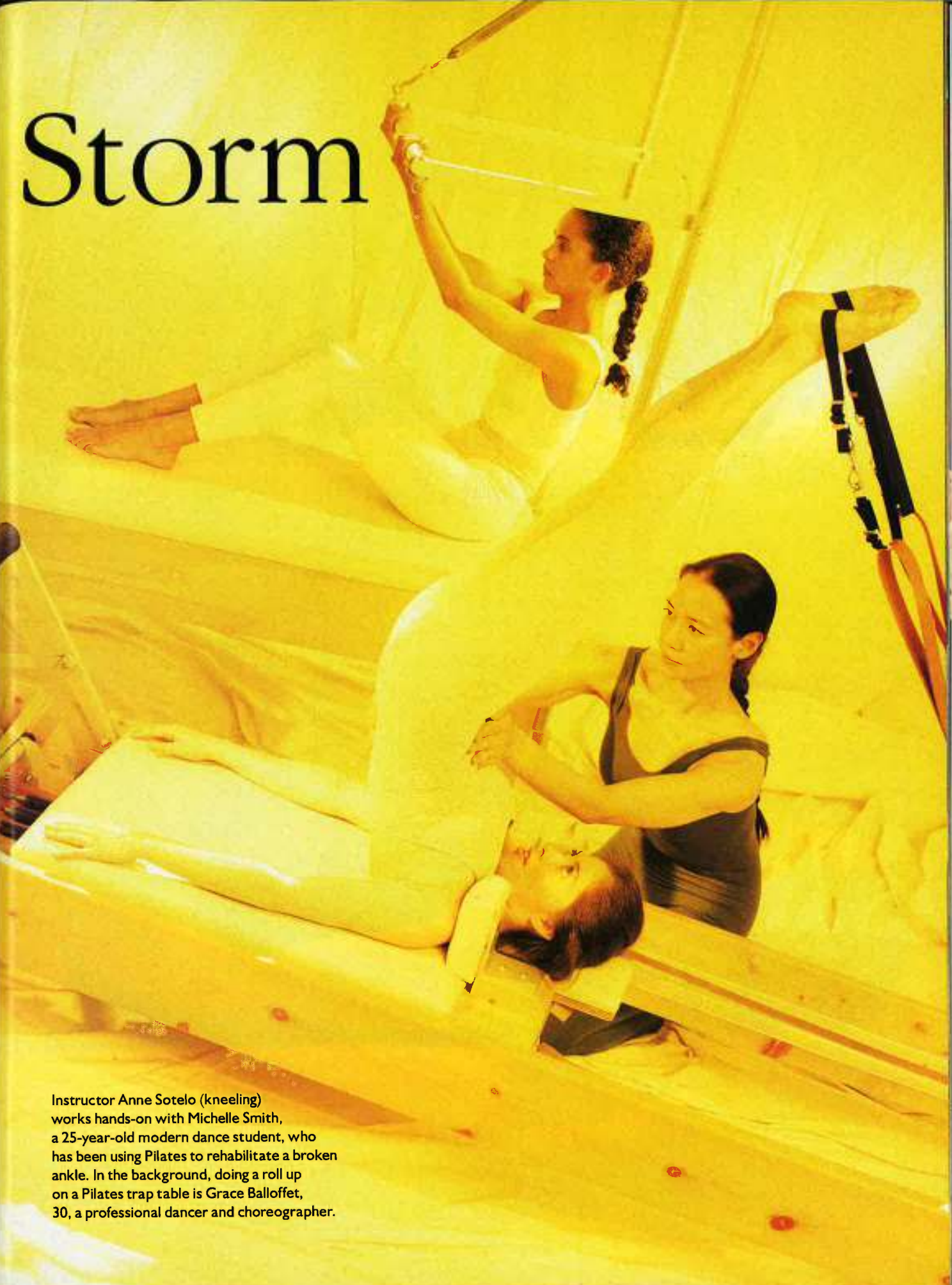
The method has even gone Hollywood. "Pilates is really big in the entertainment industry from the cosmetic point of view," says Beverly Hills trainer Siri Galliano. She shows up on movie sets with her Universal Reformer to shape up stars such as Lou Gossett Jr., Glenn Close and Jessica Lange for their roles.

"Jessica was doing *Everybody's All-American* after just having a baby," says Galliano. "She had to play a 22-year-old virgin and she hates to work out. I took her on long walks, gave her yoga and trained her with Pilates."

If you'd like to get a feel for Pilates, try the following mat workout put together by Anne Sotelo, director of Soma Syntax Studio in Venice, California. She is a professional dancer who incorporates ballet, body work and movement analysis into her Pilates-based fitness program. These exercises are from her Pilates Fundamentals floor class.

BY LIZ BRODY

Storm



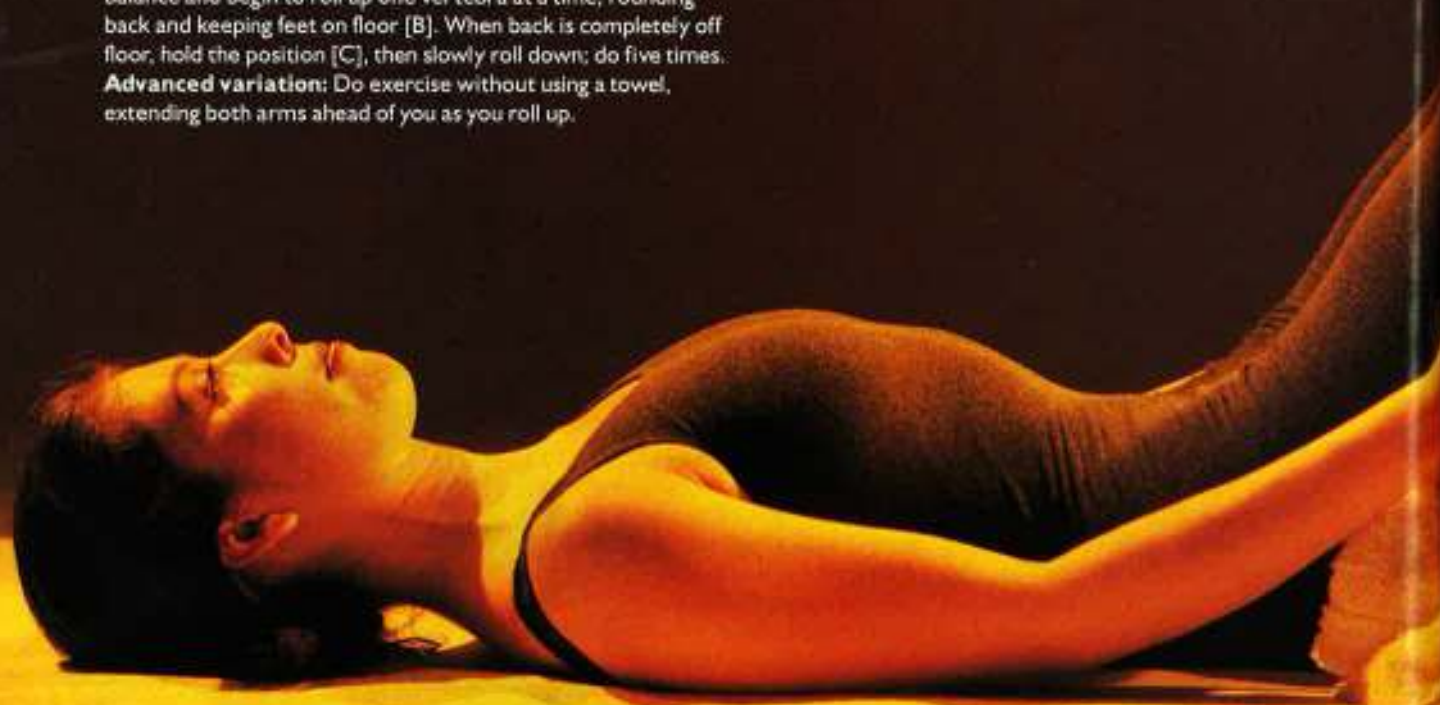
Instructor Anne Sotelo (kneeling) works hands-on with Michelle Smith, a 25-year-old modern dance student, who has been using Pilates to rehabilitate a broken ankle. In the background, doing a roll up on a Pilates trap table is Grace Balloffet, 30, a professional dancer and choreographer.

Pilates



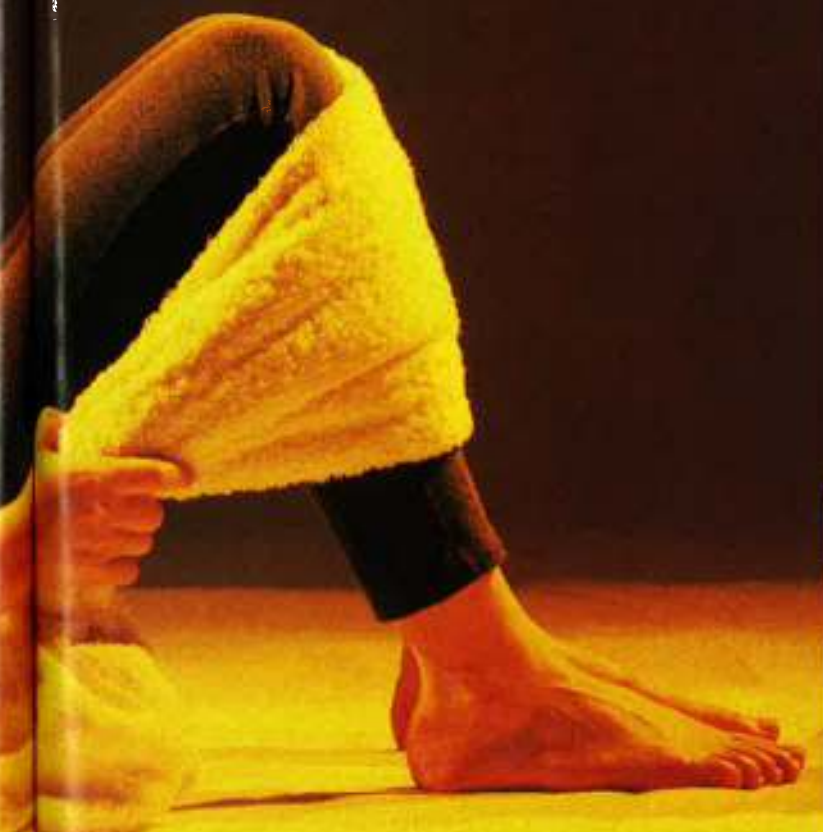
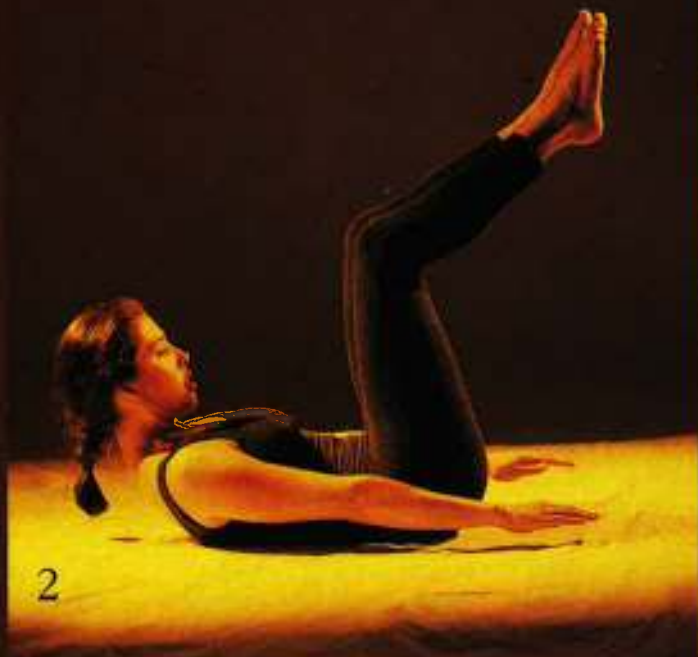
1. ROLL UP Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on floor. Hold a towel tightly across lower legs, just below knees [A]. Tucking chin to chest, pull gently on towel for balance and begin to roll up one vertebra at a time, rounding back and keeping feet on floor [B]. When back is completely off floor, hold the position [C], then slowly roll down; do five times.

Advanced variation: Do exercise without using a towel, extending both arms ahead of you as you roll up.



2 THE HUNDRED Lie on the floor, arms extended by sides, legs lifted, knees bent with thighs at slightly less than 90-degree angle to torso. Keeping spine pressed into floor and chin dropped to chest, lift shoulders and head. At the same time, lift arms about six-inches off mat and reach through fingertips, palms down. Hold position and pump arms vertically in short vigorous strokes, breathing in for five counts and out for five counts. Return to starting position; do five times. **Advanced variation:** Do exercise with legs straight at 90-degree angle, then straight at 45-degree angle; never lower legs so far that lower back lifts off floor.

3 THE SAW Sit with legs out in a V, feet flexed and toes pointed to ceiling, arms out to sides at shoulder height [A]. Twist to face right leg, crossing left arm to right foot. Contract abdominals and bend torso, headfirst, toward knee. Pulling arms apart—right arm back and left arm forward—“saw” off your pinkie toe with your pinkie finger in a back-and-forth motion three times [B]. Roll up and repeat on other side; do five times. **Advanced Variation:** Do exercise with legs in wider V.



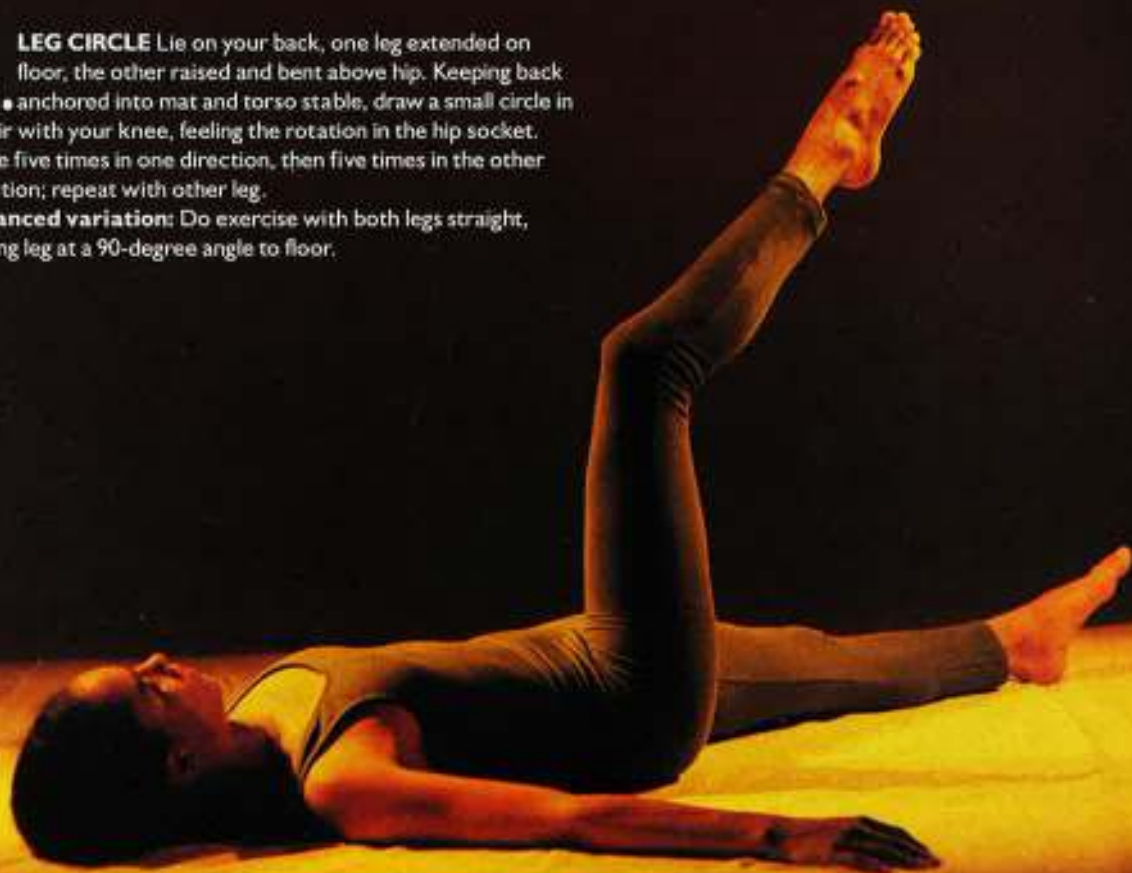
4. SIDEKICK Lie on your side supported on elbow, head supported in palm of hand. Balance yourself by putting top hand on floor in front of you, arm bent. Extend bottom leg straight out on floor at 45-degree angle to body. Extend top leg in a straight line with torso, without rolling hips. Flex feet and make sure not to push ribs out. Bend top leg and pull knee toward nose. Make sure spine and hips remain stable [A]. Kick top leg back in line with torso, pointing toes, elevating and lifting rib cage off floor [B]. Do five kicks on one side, then five on the other.

Advanced variation: Do exercise keeping top leg straight the whole time.



5. LEG CIRCLE Lie on your back, one leg extended on floor, the other raised and bent above hip. Keeping back anchored into mat and torso stable, draw a small circle in the air with your knee, feeling the rotation in the hip socket. Circle five times in one direction, then five times in the other direction; repeat with other leg.

Advanced variation: Do exercise with both legs straight, circling leg at a 90-degree angle to floor.



6 SWIMMING (THE RACK) Lie face down, forehead on mat, arms extended above head. Stretch right hand away from body with enough reach to raise it slightly off mat; at same time reach left leg in opposite direction, creating a diagonal pull through body as if you're on a rack. Continue dynamic pull for four counts, release and immediately repeat with left arm and right leg; do five times on each side. After completing reps, stretch out lower back by folding up in the other direction, kneeling with chest resting on thighs.

Advanced variation: Speed up movement by alternating strokes in two counts; then change with every beat as if you're swimming. Also lift the arms and legs a little higher—but no more than six-inches off mat.



WORKOUT SCHEDULE

For all levels: This program is an introduction to Pilates. The six moves will strengthen the major muscles of the legs, torso, back and abdominals while increasing endurance and flexibility. However, Pilates is not a cardiovascular workout; for a complete fitness program, you should also include moderate aerobic exercise three to five times a week for a minimum of 20 minutes per session. If you enjoy this workout and wish to progress further, seek the help of a trained Pilates instructor.

Warm-up: Begin with 5 minutes of mild stretching and limbering movements. Three suggestions: the cat-back stretch on all fours (arch back up as high as possible, then relax); pelvic roll (lie on back—knees bent, feet hip-width apart and flat on floor—and roll pelvis off mat until buttocks clear floor, then back down); and neck stretch (lie on back, cradle head in hands and bring it up as far as possible, dropping chin to chest; return to floor).

Cool-down: Complete your workout with static stretches for all the major muscle groups you used. Include exercises such as runner's calf stretch and rolling down a wall (stand with back against wall, heels six-inches away, arms by sides; starting with head, roll as far down as possible trying to touch toes, bend knees and roll up). You can also repeat moves you used in warm-up.

To begin: Do each movement in the sequence shown for two weeks. Shut out everything around you and concentrate on how your body feels. Take your time; it is more beneficial to experience each position than to advance too soon.

Most importantly, imagine your midsection as a girdle, so your torso is stabilized and your extremities can move freely. Pay attention to your breathing. Exhale on the effort portion of every movement, making sure it's a complete exhale so you can follow with a generous inhale.

Notice where your body is feeling the tension and think about letting the movement flow. Many people equate strength with steel. But steel won't bend, so it's not a useful kind of strength for human bodies. Always remember to relax your shoulders and elongate your neck so it's aligned with the spine. If you feel any strain or discomfort during an exercise, don't do it.

To progress: After two weeks, begin increasing the repetitions for each movement. Take another two weeks to double your repetitions on each exercise. Stay with the beginning positions for as long as you like, maximizing sensory awareness as you work. Once you feel comfortable with these moves, try the more advanced versions.

Frequency: 20 minutes, three to four times a week.

Rx FOR ACTION

The following sources can help you locate a Pilates studio in your area:

Ken Endelman, Current Concepts, 7500 14th Ave., Ste. 23, Sacramento, CA 95820-3539; (916) 454-2838; fax, (916) 454-3120.

Institute for the Pilates Method, 1807 Second St., #28, Santa Fe, NM 87501; (505) 988-1990.

For videos, *Working Out the Pilates Way* (Institute for the Pilates Method) and *Pilates Conditioning Techniques on the Mat and Apparatus*, contact Elizabeth Larkam, Center for Sports Medicine, St. Francis Memorial Hospital, 900 Hyde St., San Francisco, CA 94109.