



how pilates can benefit your body mechanics

Only a decade ago, very few people had even heard of the Pilates method of body conditioning. Today, it's suddenly become one of the most popular exercise methods in the United States. This may cause some to think that Pilates is a fad that will burn brightly for a short period of time and then disappear like step aerobics or jazzercise. But this seems unlikely. Even though Pilates may seem like an overnight success, it has actually been around for decades. It's only in the last few years that it has reached a critical threshold of exposure that has caused it to explode into the public consciousness.

Pilates is a comprehensive method that comprises more than 500 strengthening and stretching exercises that were developed over a period of 50 years by Joseph Pilates. Its genesis began during World War I when Joseph Pilates was searching for a way to help rehabilitate injured soldiers who were bedridden. In his quest, he developed a series of exercises that

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FIGURE 1A

one could do in bed, using springs and pulleys for resistance. From there, he developed his system for the public by creating apparatuses that incorporated these springs and pulleys for resistance work (Figure 1a-c). He also developed a series of mat exercises that could be done without any external machines. From 1917 until his death in 1967, Joseph Pilates continued to add to and refine his exercise method that he called the "art of controllogy." It was only after his death that it came to be called the "Pilates method," or simply, "Pilates."

Inherent in the name that Pilates chose for his system—controllogy—is the concept that the goal of physical fitness is for the mind to develop a fine-tuned control of the body. Joseph Pilates was an athlete who not only exercised for strength, but also studied Asian methods and practiced yoga. He endeavored to incorporate what he considered to be the perfect balance of mind and body into his system. With regard to the physicality of his exercises, he



FIGURE 1B



FIGURE 1C

FIGURES 1A-C PHOTOGRAPH © GRANT INDUSTRIES, MANAGER OF THE ALBERTA PILATES FOUNDATION ARCHIVES, COURTESY OF SHARON GALLAGHER, P.T., GRANT INDUSTRIES, MANAGER OF THE ALBERTA PILATES

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