



## Pilates and Pregnancy

by Annalyn Brine BPE, CEP, RK, Stott Pilates Instructor



*“Pilates is more than just core! This system of exercise also includes breath work, range of motion, relaxation, body awareness and posture practice which can be of great assistance to your changing body.”*



Pilates is a unique method of body conditioning which focuses on strengthening the body’s core and creating muscle balance and symmetry. A combination of stretching, strengthening, coordination and breath work, Pilates can be especially appreciated by pregnant women. As you ease your pregnant belly on the couch to elevate your swollen ankles, let’s take a look at some of the benefits that can be gained when participating in even just 10 minutes of Pilates a day.

As mentioned, the primary focus of Pilates revolves around improving core strength and stability. Your core includes the deepest layers of your abdominals that surround your abdomen like a girdle and also include the muscles of your pelvic floor (imagine putting on a pair of “granny panties” that pull right up to your ribs - that is the area these muscles cover). During pregnancy, this girdle stretches out to accommodate a growing baby. This increasing weight places a greater demand on your spine and is often the cause of back pain, a common complaint during pregnancy. By practicing the core, hip and leg strengthening exercises as performed in Pilates, you are providing more support to accommodate your changing shape and lessen the burden on your back.

Pilates is more than just core! This system of exercise also includes breath work, range of motion, relaxation, body awareness and posture practice which can be of great assistance to your changing body. On the note of posture, a good Pilates program does not necessarily have to take place solely on the exercise mat. The beautiful thing about Pilates, is that if taught by a qualified instructor, you should be able to incorporate basic principles in to your everyday life. As your posture improves, you stand up taller, you sit

without slouching and you use your lungs more effectively when breathing, all which can help you through your nine month marathon! So the next time you are in line buying pickles and ice cream, take a moment to execute a few pelvic floor lifts as taught by your instructor. This simple exercise not only assists in supporting the weight (and pressure) from your growing baby, but will be very useful after giving birth to help with possible incontinence.

Once your baby has moved from ‘womb’ and into ‘room’, Pilates can effectively help your post-baby body in many ways. First of all, there is the infamous ‘mummy tummy’. As mentioned, Pilates exercises work from the inside out, therefore helping to ‘tighten up’ your internal girdle and strengthen those stretched out abdominal muscles. In addition, those pelvic floor exercises you faithfully practiced throughout your pregnancy will help possible incontinence (not to mention improved sex life! Not that you’re even thinking about that right now!)

Another area of concern for new moms is upper back and neck. Enlarged breasts, breastfeeding and carrying your newborn promote rounded shoulders and a head forward posture which can be counteracted by Pilates practice.

As with every exercise program, you should consult with a health care professional before commencing. It is also important to work with a qualified instructor who understands the changing needs of your body as it progresses through pregnancy to avoid injury.

Annalyn Brine  
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**About the Author:**

Annalyn has worked in health and fitness as an Exercise Therapist for over 8 years and as a Stott Pilates Instructor for 6 years. Her easy going personality and humor adds to her ability to motivate and work with individuals in achieving their health and fitness goals. She keeps active by chasing her one year old, running, snowboarding, Pilates

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Anna has the qualifications, experience and personality that make her an exceptional trainer. If you are in the Edmonton area and you are looking to improve your health and fitness you can contact Annalyn at:

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