

# Overcoming youth illnesses led to exercise-meditation plan

By Jill Lieber, USA TODAY

Pilates was developed in the early 1900s by German boxer and gymnast Joseph Pilates.

Born in 1880, Pilates grew up a sickly child, suffering from asthma and rheumatic fever. He overcame both through exercise, yoga and Zen meditation, and by 14 he was a gymnast, skier and skin diver.

At the beginning of World War I, while living in England, Pilates was interned because of his German citizenship and turned his focus to keeping his fellow internees on the Isle of Man physically and mentally fit. Pilates also helped rehabilitate amputees in the camp hospitals and designed physical therapy machines from bedsprings.

In 1926, Pilates immigrated to the USA and opened a studio in New York City, where his exercise method became popular with ballet dancers.

Six principles form Pilates' core:

- Concentration — essential to connecting mind and body.
- Control — deliberate, purposeful muscle movement.
- Center — power emanates from the core or "powerhouse." In terms of muscular activity, the source of all power and movement is at the center of the body.
- Fluidity — graceful motion, never static, isolated or hurried.
- Precision — quality of exercise, not quantity of movement.
- Breathing — oxygen controls all movement.

Pilates is performed on a main piece of equipment called a Reformer, a wood or metal bed with a sliding carriage, which is spring-loaded to resemble muscle tension and rigged with pulleys, handles and a stationary bar.

The exercises are done by pushing or pulling against resistance while lying, sitting or kneeling. Other Pilates equipment and accessories range from the Wunda Chair, a spring-loaded stool used for a variety of exercises for balance and control, to foot and toe stretchers.

Often done one-on-one with a certified instructor, Pilates also has been adapted for the masses in mat classes in studios, health clubs and gyms. Private sessions range from \$50-\$120 an hour.

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# Golfers getting into swing of fitness regimen

By Jill Lieber, USA TODAY

Of all the professional athletes doing Pilates, golfers have adapted to it the fastest. Pilates disciples include David Duval, Annika Sorenstam and Kelli Kuehne. Other devotees are Andrew McGee, Carin Koch, Grace Park and Betsy King, who have been trained by Angela Sundberg, owner of Bodyscapes in Scottsdale, Ariz.



A Pilates program has helped Annika Sorenstam dominate women's golf.

By Alastair Grant, AP

"Pilates is about focus, and so is golf," Sundberg says. "Pilates is also about movement from the center of the body, using all of the muscles of the body, and so is golf. Pilates allows golfers to move differently."

Sarah Christensen, owner of the Orchid Pagoda Studio in Fairfax, Va., has seen Pilates have a profound impact on her clients who golf. So she has created a golf-specific Pilates exercise program for every level of golfer that's taught in resorts and golf clubs throughout the country. She also has written a manual with golf-specific Pilates exercises that can be done at home and on the course.

"Your golf pro can say, 'Swing this way.' But you won't be able to do that if your body can't do that," she says. "By doing Pilates, you can make corrections to your body — strengthen the core, increase flexibility, build stability in the pelvis and shoulder girdles, balance both sides of the body, which will allow you to hit it farther, straighter and more accurately."

She is so sold on this training method that Christensen has filed a trademark application for the term "Pilates for Golf" and certifies instructors in her program.

Christensen says there's another reason Pilates for golf works so well, especially for the pros.

"I hate to say this, but a lot of pro golfers get a lot out of Pilates because they probably aren't in as good a shape as pro football, basketball or baseball players," Christensen says. "Only in the last few years have pro golfers found fitness."

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