

# The Benefits of a Workplace Pilates Programme



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Pilates takes its name from Joseph Hubertus Pilates. A German living in Britain and then America, Joseph Pilates began his career as a proponent and teacher of “physical culture” – a broad-based movement advocating physical education through exercise, athletic excellence, and mental discipline.

Through his own experience and teaching, he created a system of corrective exercises that he introduced to the American market in the late 1920s. One of his teaching methods included the use of equipment referred to by him as: apparatus. Perhaps the best-known piece of equipment designed by Joseph, is the Pilates reformer.

Joseph Pilates was born near Dusseldorf in 1880. He dedicated his entire life to improve his own physical body as he suffered from asthma, rickets and rheumatic fever when he was a child. To overcome the physical weakness that resulted from these ailments, Joseph Pilates developed a great interest in bodybuilding and all forms of physical exercise including eastern and western exercise including gymnastics, body-building and yoga.

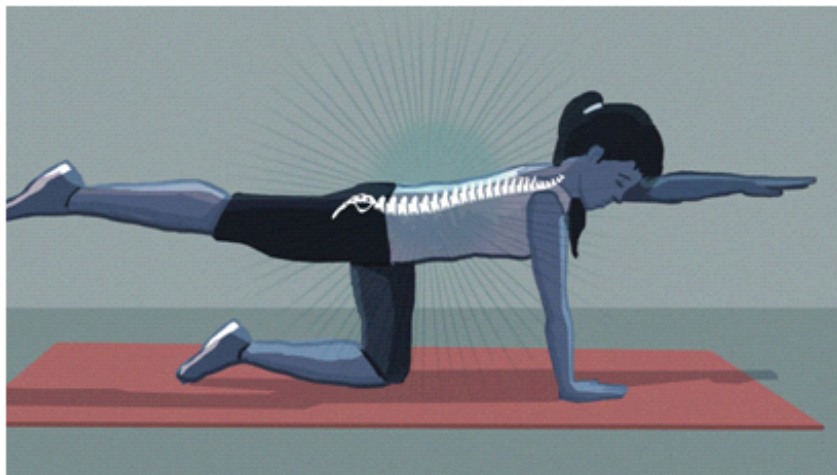
Later on during World War I and whilst in a British internment camp, Joseph Pilates used his knowledge of anatomy and all the exercise disciplines he had studied to develop his own method of a physical fitness system that was initially called “Contrology”. He applied his exercise while in camp training his fellow inmates and it is said that these inmates survived the 1918 influenza epidemic due to their good physical shape.

It was during this time that Joseph Pilates began designing the equipment for which he is famous. He attached bed springs to the hospital beds to help support the patients’ limbs, leading to the development of his famous piece of equipment known as the ‘Cadillac’. Much of his equipment, although slightly adapted, is still in use today in many Pilates Studios.



### Key Benefits of Pilates Exercises

- Improved flexibility
- Increased muscle strength and tone
- Balanced muscular strength on both sides of your body
- Enhanced muscular control of your back and limbs
  - Improved stabilisation of spine
  - Improved posture
- Rehabilitation or prevention of injuries related to muscle imbalances
  - Improved physical coordination and balance
  - Relaxation of your shoulders, neck and upper back
    - Prevention of musculoskeletal injuries
- Increased lung capacity and circulation through deep breathing and improved rib biomechanics
  - Improved concentration
  - Increased body awareness
- Stress management and relaxation



#### Pilates Exercises for Back Pain & MSDs

Pilates exercises are frequently recommended to help prevent and decrease back pain, including lower back pain. They strengthen core support for the back, teach good alignment, and provide gentle stretches for tight back muscles.

If you currently have back pain, consult with your healthcare practitioner (preferably Osteopath, Chiropractor or Physiotherapist) before undertaking any exercise program. You should also note:

- If you are new to Pilates or your back is fragile at the moment, you might be better served to work with the fundamental Pilates exercises first
- Breathe! Deep breathing activates the supportive core muscles of your trunk (among many other benefits, like keeping you alive)
- Your abdominal and back muscles are mutually supportive. You will want to support your back by engaging your abs during these exercises
- Keep your neck long and your shoulders down and away from your ears, like a giraffe
- Be attentive to symmetry and balance. In most cases, you will want your shoulders even and your hips to be even
- Do these exercises mindfully. Go slow, be gentle, and don't do anything that hurts

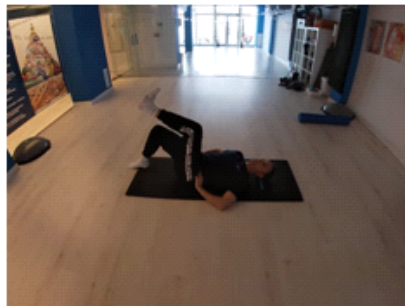
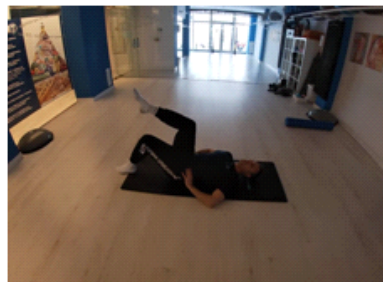
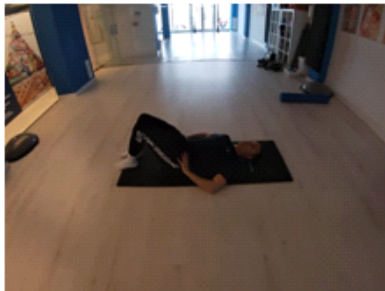
Key Pilates Exercises beneficial for reducing MSDs

### Supine

#### Pelvic Tilt or Imprinting

Video clip viewable here featuring our Director Gareth Milner:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pD6XUcymZII>



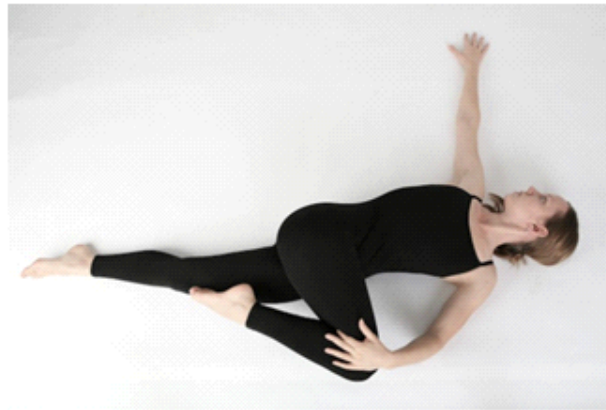
This simple but effective exercise gets the deep core muscles switched on and builds strength in the support system of the spine.

Lay on your back in Neutral Spine (relaxed back muscles and neutral curves), knees bent and feet flat on the floor.

Breathe out and gently engage and "lift" pelvic floor muscles (those that stop you from urinating), then pull the navel in towards the spine so that the lower back is "imprinted" into the floor.

Breathe in and relax the muscles and return to Neutral Spine.

Pelvic tilt is an exercise to strengthen the lower back, glute muscles, lower abdominal muscles, and maintain hip muscle balance.



### Supine Spinal Twist

Rotation helps to stretch the back muscles and controlling this movement also helps to strengthen the oblique muscles to further support the spine. Lay on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor and arms stretched to the sides. Keep knees squeezed together (you may want to use a towel to help), slowly take the knees over to one side, keeping shoulder blades in contact with the floor.

Breathe out pulling your navel into your spine and drag the knees back to the centre. Repeat the exercises 3-5 times to each side, alternating sides. You may choose to also hold the stretch position for 10-15 seconds.

This exercise can act as a stretch, but the main purpose is focused on the stabilization of your core and strengthening of your obliques.

### Sidelying



Side Kick Up/ Down

Kick Up

Double check your line up. Your shoulders should be stacked one on top of the other, as should the hips. Also, your shoulders and hips are in a line with the knees and ankles a little in front.

Make sure that your abdominal muscles are pulled in and up. Now, lengthening even more smoothly through the top leg, kick up towards the ceiling (smoothly, use your abs for control.) Keep the hip bones stacked. Make sure that the pelvis does not tilt back to let the leg go up.

Pull your abdominals up, in opposition to the lengthening of the leg, as you control the descent of the leg.



#### Clam Kickout

Lying on side, put your knees together and bend forwards. Heels should be together and inline with hips and shoulder. Head relaxed on shoulder. Create a small space under the waist. Roll the top hip slightly forwards and keep it forwards. Squeeze the top buttock and slowly raise the top knee keeping the feet together. Make sure the hips are still and do not rock backwards. Extend the leg out straight inline with the body. Bring the feet back together.

The clam is often prescribed in physical therapy for people who have knee pain as it activates the muscles needed to support knee function.

#### Prone



### Prone Spine Extension

Lie on your stomach with the legs long, tops of the feet down and pelvis in a neutral position. Bring the hands right underneath the shoulders, elbows tight to your sides. Lift the bellybutton up off the mat, activating the core.

Take a deep breath in. As you exhale, start to lift the chest and the head to hover up and off the mat, keeping the core engaged, using the back muscles to lift. Inhale to lower the chest down with control, exhale to repeat, lifting chest, and head back up.

This back-extension exercise is a maneuver utilized to work the erector spinae and other small stabilizing muscles of the back.



### Prone Single Leg Lift

Prone single leg lifts are great for activating and strengthening the hamstrings and glutes. This exercise prepares the body to perform "swimming" and "swan."

To perform this exercise, lay face down, tailbone reaching long. Exhale to reach and lift one leg off the floor. Inhale to lower the leg. Alternate the legs. Keep the pelvis still. You should feel the base of the glutes and back of the thighs working. Move from the thighbone. Because you want to activate the hamstrings and glutes, focus on moving the leg from the thighbone, rather than the foot. Keep the leg reaching long, rather than going for too much height – this will help keep your low back happy by helping your pelvis stay neutral. Ensure that you are lifting the abdominals in and up as you reach the leg away from the floor.

This exercise strengthens the lower back, glutes, hamstrings and core. Then, slowly return your leg to the original position with the knee touching the floor.

The Benefits of managing Manual Handling Injuries in hazardous physical working environments –  
A complete In-House Management Strategy

"The higher your energy level, the more efficient your body. The more efficient your body, the better you feel, and the more you will use your talent to produce outstanding results." -Tony Robbins

Providing your team with a happy and healthy workplace culture is important no matter what size your business is. Osteopathic Solutions can support your business by providing onsite (at your workplace) Stretching & Pilates Core Stability Exercise Classes to help your employees feel happier and healthier and most importantly, decrease and treat recurring musculoskeletal disorders.

For more information please view

[www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/stretching-core-stability-classes](http://www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/stretching-core-stability-classes)



What are the benefits of a workplace Stretching & Pilates Core Stability Exercise Programme?

**Enhance Productivity:** Healthier and pain-free employees work approximately 143 effective hours per month – compared to 49 effective hours per month by the less healthy employees.

**Reduce Absenteeism:** An estimated 141.4 million working days were lost because of sickness or injury in the UK back in 2018, the equivalent to 4.4 days per worker.

**Boost Your Bottom Line:** Businesses who offer workplace wellness programs inclusive of exercises such as Pilates are almost 80% more likely to record significantly higher financial performance than competitors who don't.

**Improve Physical Health:** Four out of five people experience some form of pain related to long periods of time spent sitting at a desk. Contrastingly, our bodies also suffer when they are also carrying out manual handling tasks for many hours of the day. Introducing Stretching & Pilates into the workplace specifically addresses the physical impact to our bodies caused by these tasks.

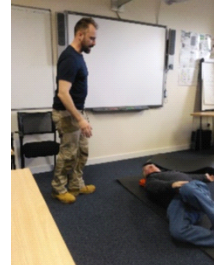
**Promotes Positive Mental Health:** Beyond Blue (experts on mental health), promote regular exercise and physical activity as a way to reduce stress and anxiety, and to help in the prevention of and the recovery of depression.

**Improve your organisational culture:** Employees that regularly perform Pilates exercise have a higher job satisfaction in comparison to employees that don't do any exercise. Workplaces that encourage employees to exercise together build a positive team environment and a supportive workplace culture.

If your workplace has not put a Pilates programme for your operational teams, at Osteopathic Solutions we recommend attending a local Pilates class. Why not team up with some work colleagues and pick one closest to your place of work. Pilates Near you ([www.pilatesnearlyou.co.uk](http://www.pilatesnearlyou.co.uk)) allows you to enter in a postcode and find the nearest Pilates class to you. The only issue you may encounter is not getting enough 1-2-1 time with the Instructor. With that said, for optimum results, a 1-2-1 class with a Pilates Instructor is best practice.



Osteopathic Solutions Provision for Bristow Helicopters  
 'Manual Handling Refresher Training & MSD Rehabilitation Classes'

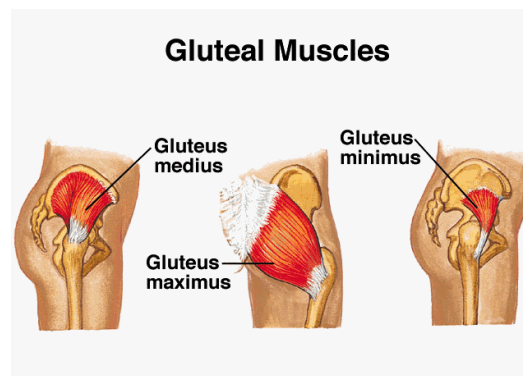


For our 2020 programme for Bristow Helicopters we recently started providing Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Rehabilitation Exercise Courses incorporated into their Manual Handling Refresher Training. Within the 3 Hour Courses we are providing 1 Hour of Manual Handling Practical Skills as a refresher focusing on awkward manual handling tasks, and 2 Hours of musculoskeletal rehabilitation with Stretching and Pilates Core Stability matt work.

Bristow's employees include crew men, pilots, paramedics and engineers. The search and rescue crew men have extremely hazardous manual handling tasks (just like fire and rescue services) Because of this, we have customised a rehabilitation exercise programme for their teams. This includes Lumbo-Pelvic Core Stability and Stretching Exercises, as lower back musculoskeletal disorders have been Bristow's most common cause of manual handling lost time accidents.

As the crew men are seated for long periods inside the helicopters, with the pilots having to frequently bend their neck to the sides during flight (with the helmet adding extra weight to the neck), we have included neck, shoulder and pectoral stretching exercises.

In the above picture on the left, Gareth is performing a stretch of his left Gluteus Minimus and Gluteus Medius. In the right picture, he is observing (and coaching) an employee performing a lumbar stretch.



## Our Pilates Day

Pilates Exercises Videos recorded for Bristow Helicopters.

Our Director Gareth Milner recently attended a local Pilates studio to carry out Pilates Exercises to send to the teams at Bristow Helicopters.

See below for a brief insight into a few of the Workplace Wellness Stretching & Pilates Exercises he covered within the session.

### Lower Back & Gluteal Muscle Stretch



- Bring both legs up to the chest
  - Hold for 20 seconds
  - Repeat 3 times

This exercise of stretching the lumbar back muscles is great for back injuries.

### Pilates Hip & Core Stability Exercises

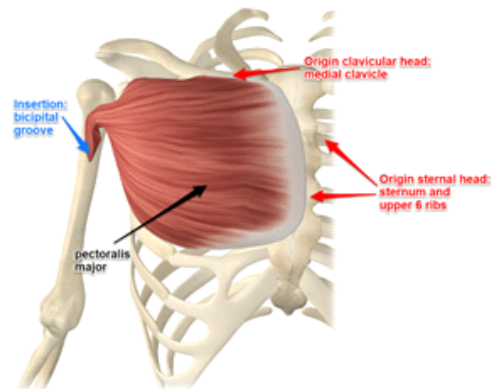


Using controlled movements gently move your legs out around 45 degrees, before moving them back in.

Repeat for 3 sets

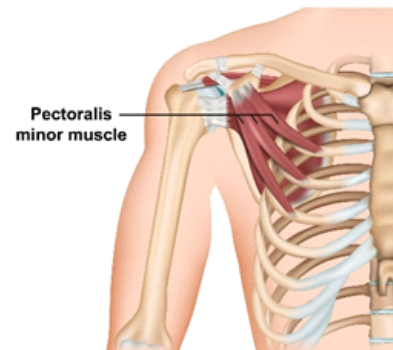
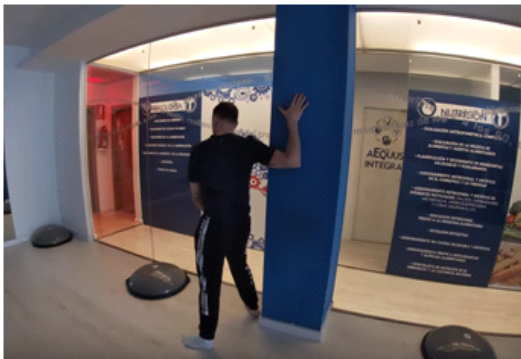
This exercise is great for aiding mobility in the lower back.

### Pectoral Muscle Stretch



While positioning feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart place your hand and forearm against the wall and tilt your body forward while turning your head slightly in the opposite direction.

Repeat on the other side



For this exercise, bend your arm to 90 degrees and lean against the wall and turn.

This muscle can get very tight and can be indirectly involved in creating neck pain, so stretching this muscle can greatly help those who suffer with neck problems.

Repeat on the other side.

Hold all of these stretches for 10/20 seconds.

## Neck Stretches



Hold these stretches for 10 seconds each side.  
 While taking a deep breath in, tilt your head to one side with your hand across the ear.  
 Let your breath go. Repeat on the other side.  
 This exercise can have immediate beneficial effects for those suffering from neck pain.

## Essential Stretching Exercises to Treat Back Pain



For this exercise, slightly spread your legs apart before bending forwards and stretching the arms out, with palms flat on the floor.

