

## Pilates Home Exercises

These exercises are designed to help you to increase your strength and postural awareness particularly around your lower back. They should be comfortable to perform when done correctly. They should not add to your pain or give you new pain. Please work at the level that is right for you and stop and start as needed. As you become more familiar with the exercises you can increase the amount of each exercise gradually.

### The Pilates Rest Position

In the rest position your muscles are relaxed and your joints are in neutral alignment. You should try to incorporate the key points of the rest position into all postures throughout your day.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent up and your head supported on a small cushion or folded towel
- Relax the weight of your head into the support
- Lengthen the back of the neck by reaching the crown of the head towards the wall behind you
- Gently draw your shoulder blades down towards your waist to relax the neck and shoulders
- Soften the ribcage into the mat to connect the back of the ribcage on the mat
- Place your feet and knees hip distance apart
- Make sure that your weight rests on the six key points of the feet: the base of each big toes, each little toe and the centre of the heel on each foot
- Imagine your pelvis is a bucket of water. Tip it backwards to spill some water out the back of the bucket and you will feel your back gently flatten onto the mat. Now tip it forwards to spill some water out of the front of the bucket and you will feel your lower back arch slightly. Find your 'neutral spine' position by resting the bucket halfway between these two movements. There should be a small space between your back and the mat, and your pubic and hip bones should form a small flat triangle
- Maintaining the neutral spine position, INHALE wide into the sides and back of the ribcage and then EXHALE. At the end of your exhale, slowly draw up through the pelvic floor muscles to engage these and your deep abdominal muscles. Hold this gentle contraction and keep breathing for up to ten breaths. This is called engaging your centre.





## Hundreds

Starting position: Rest position.

### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE and engage your centre, maintaining neutral alignment
  - Keep centered and focus on ten breath cycles
  - Add small arm lift and lower
- Reps: 10



### Level 2

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, float your right knee over your right hip to assume the 'tabletop' leg position
  - Hold this tabletop position and focus on five breath cycles
  - On fifth breath out, lower your leg to resume the rest position
  - Add small arm lift and lower
  - Repeat on your opposite leg
- Reps: 10



## One leg Stretch

Starting position: Rest position. Centre engaged.

### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, slide your left heel forwards along the floor
  - INHALE, slide your left heel back along the floor
  - Repeat alternating legs
- Reps: 10



## Hip Twist

Starting position: Rest position. Centre engaged.

### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
- EXHALE, roll your left leg outwards from your body
- INHALE, roll your left leg back inwards until your left knee is in line with the left hip
- Repeat alternating leg



## Double leg stretch

Starting position: Rest position. Centre engaged.

### Level 1

- EXHALE, float your arms upwards, placing your hands over your shoulders. Palms facing away from you, elbows soft.
  - INHALE and hold this position
  - EXHALE, lower both arms overhead keeping your ribcage soft
  - INHALE, circle both arms outwards and then downwards to finish with your hands over your shoulders
- Reps: 10



### Level 2

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, lower both arms overhead while simultaneously sliding your left heel forwards along the floor
  - INHALE, circle both arms outwards and then downwards. Simultaneously, slide your left heel back along the floor towards your body
  - Repeat alternating legs
- Reps: 10





## Shoulder bridge

Starting position: Rest position. Centre engaged.

### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
- EXHALE, gently roll your lower back into mat, scoop your tailbone upwards and continue to peel your spine off the mat, bone by bone until you are resting on your shoulder blades
- INHALE and hold the shoulder bridge position
- EXHALE, lower the shoulder bridge by lowering one bone at a time to the mat, beginning with the highest vertebrae of your bridge and finishing with your tailbone to return to neutral position.
- Reps:10



## Scissors

Starting position: Rest position. Centre engaged.

### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, slide your right foot inwards towards your sitting bone and float this leg into tabletop
  - INHALE and hold the tabletop position
  - EXHALE, lower your right leg to the mat
  - Repeat alternating legs
- Reps: 10



## Clam

### Level 1

Starting position: Side lying. Underneath arm outstretched in alignment with the trunk with your head resting on this arm and small cushion. Hips bent up to approx. 45° and knees bent up to approx. 90°. Shoulders and hips stacked. Top hand resting on the floor. Draw the top hip downwards away from the top shoulder to create a small space between your waist and the mat.

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, lift the top knee upwards keeping the feet together
  - INHALE, lower the top knee onto the bottom leg
- Reps: 10



### Level 2

Starting position: Align the body as for level one. Then lift both feet into the air approx. 8 inches, keeping them stacked.

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, lift the top knee upwards, keeping the feet together and lifted off the mat
  - INHALE, lower the top knee onto the bottom leg, keeping the feet lifted off the mat
- Reps: 10



## One leg kick

Starting position: Lie on your front. Legs out straight, hip-distance apart. Arms folded, with your forehead resting on the back of the hands. Neck long.



### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, bend your left knee. Then gently pulse your knee further towards your left hip three times. Firstly, with a pointed ankle, secondly with a flexed ankle and lastly with a pointed ankle.
  - INHALE, extend your knee and lower your leg to the mat
- Reps: 10



## One leg circle

Starting position: Rest position. Centre engaged.

### Level 1

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE, float your left leg into tabletop
  - Imagine drawing small circles from the tip of your knee on the ceiling.
  - Now co-ordinate this movement with your breathing by EXHALING as knee circles away from your body and . . .
  - INHALING as your knee circles towards your body
  - At the end of your leg circles, EXHALE to lower your leg and then repeat on your other side
- Reps: 10





## Level 2

- INHALE to prepare
  - EXHALE and lift your left leg through the tabletop position and then straighten this leg upwards towards the ceiling. Maintain your neutral spine position.
  - Imagine drawing small circles from the tips of your toes on the ceiling, keeping your leg straight.
  - Repeat on the opposite side
- Reps: 10



## References:

The Australian Physiotherapy and Pilates Institute.

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**If you wish to make any comments or to ask about any research evidence used to write this leaflet, please contact the Patient Experience team confidentially: phone 01202 448003, write to the Health Information Centre (address above), or email [healthinfo@poole.nhs.uk](mailto:healthinfo@poole.nhs.uk).**