

# PILATES FOR SENIORS

*These days more mindful forms of exercise are garnering attention from active adults.*  
**HERE'S WHY.**

The philosophy that effective and responsible exercise as the foundation to a better lifestyle is paramount to the STOTT PILATES® program. Says Kerrie Lee Brown, VP, Communications of Merrithew Health and Fitness™, whether you're working one-on-one in a rehabilitative setting, as a personal trainer, or with a small group at a fitness facility, the aim remains the same: optimal musculoskeletal performance - strength, flexibility and endurance - without risking injury or building bulk and with a focus on core stability, including pelvic and shoulder girdle stabilization, neutral alignment and breathing. The result: a balanced and aligned body that feels revitalized and moves with ease - important goals for older clients.

Stefania Della Pia, Program Director of Merrithew Health & Fitness™ answers some important questions on Pilates programming for Seniors and the foundation that Pilates can build for a healthier, safer and more functionally fit lifestyle.

**OSF:** Are seniors good prospects for Pilates classes—either mat or equipment?

**DELLA PIA:** Yes. Although most seniors have some medical or mobility concerns, much of the repertoire can be modified to suit every individual. Because of these mobility concerns, seniors may not be best suited for a group class at the local fitness facility, but a tailored session is ideal.

**OSF:** If they are, what special considerations/precautions need to be taken by clubs?

**DELLA PIA:** The most important issue when dealing with an older clientele is ensuring that the fitness professional teaching the session is qualified to work with this special population. Age-related conditions like osteoarthritis,



diabetes, and circulatory problems require very specific programming considerations to ensure the workout is safe and still effective. A well-trained instructor will be able to keep all necessary factors in mind for each individual in the class.

**OSF:** Do they need to modify the classes?

**DELLA PIA:** Most likely, yes. In a lot of cases, an older adult will have trouble getting down to the floor to perform Matwork exercises. A skilled instructor will be able to construct a full-body workout in the most appropriate position for the individuals. This might even mean conducting the entire class while seated in a chair.

**OSF:** Do instructors need special training/certifications?

**DELLA PIA:** Yes, special training is imperative. Considering that many older exercisers are dealing with more than one age-related health concern, understanding the indications and contraindications of each is critical. Instructors should look for specialized training such as an Injuries & Special Populations course which will equip instructors with the background knowledge necessary to be able to effectively work with this group.

**OSF:** What benefits can Pilates provide for seniors?

**DELLA PIA:** The list of benefits to an older participant is extensive. Maintaining mobility as long as possible is one of the main goals. Many adults who have begun participation in a Pilates-based exercise program report having more energy, decreased aches and pains and an improved quality of life. Clinical studies report that an exercise program can slow the progress of age-related conditions like osteoporosis, sarcopenia and may even contribute to delayed onset of mental health issues like Alzheimer's. Maintaining independence seems to be one of the biggest boons.

**OSF:** Should seniors take Pilates classes separately from younger members?

**DELLA PIA:** Yes. Since the exercise choices may need to be altered significantly, it would be much more beneficial for an older member to take a class with other older participants. Having specialized classes may also take away some of the intimidation or self confidence issues that may go along with a senior attending classes at a club or fitness facility.

**OSF:** How should these classes be marketed so that seniors know the classes target them?

**DELLA PIA:** There have been a number of marketing initiatives that teach centers how to market to this specialized group. Once again, if an individual knows that the class is going to be geared toward them, they may be more inclined to sign-up - which is good for everyone concerned. **OSF**



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