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## REAL-LIFE SHOCKER

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**HOW TO GET A GREAT BODY IN 30 DAYS**

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# A new body in 30 days!

Sounds impossible? Not according to Joseph Pilates if you commit to these set of moves for at least a month. TANIA WEE explains.

Joseph H. Pilates, creator of Pilates once said of his methods, "After 10 sessions you'll notice a difference, after 20 sessions other people will notice a difference, and after 30 sessions you'll have a whole new body."

As a nurse in Great Britain, he designed exercise techniques and equipment aimed at rehabilitating bedridden and immobile soldiers during World War I. In current times, Pilates has been the exercise of choice for Hollywood stars such as Madonna and Vanessa Williams, also dancers and gymnasts.

Using controlled motions in the form of mat exercises or equipment to tone and strengthen the body, Pilates can help you to improve your mental and physical wellbeing, increase flexibility and strengthen the muscles without adding muscle bulk. It also increases blood circulation in the body and overall endurance and coordination.

As Mr Pilates himself has put it, by performing these exercises for 30 days, you'll find yourself with a fitter body. Pilates instructor, Melissa Wong of Pilatique Pilates Studio recommends the following eight sequence of exercises. She suggests doing five sets of each exercise for every day of the week.

### EXERCISE 1: HALF ROLL BACK

**Step 1:** Sit with your pelvis and spine in line and straightened. Keep your knees bent and apart and your arms reaching forward in line with your shoulders.

**Step 2:** Exhale slowly as you rotate the spine to the side. Allow the same side arm to follow in a downward and upward sweep upon reaching maximum rotation. Watch out for neck and shoulder tension.

**Step 3:** Maintain other arm position and ensure that your feet stay grounded with knees bent during the rotation. Inhale as you rotate the spine to face forward, arm following downward and upward sweep, and lengthen the spine to the starting position.



### EXERCISE 2: BREAST STROKE

**Step 1:** Lie facing down with your legs spread hip-distance apart. Keep your hands to the sides of your shoulders with elbows bent.

**Step 2:** Exhale and hover your upper body slightly off the mat and reach your arms forward, keeping your shoulders away from your ears.

**Step 3:** Inhale and extend the spine as far as the last ribs; maintain contact with mat. At the same time, keep your arms long and circle them to the side and to the hips. Make sure that your head and neck always follow the line of the upper back and avoid lifting the head too much.

**Step 4:** Exhale and lower the body to a low hover like in step 2. To complete the exercise, on the last exhale, flex elbows and lower the body to starting position.





### EXERCISE 3: COUNT TO HUNDRED

**Step:** Lie supine, steadying your lower back, extend your legs off the ground so that your lower back does not arch away from the mat. Keep your head, neck and shoulders flexed forward. Your arms should be off the floor and in line with the shoulders. Maintain this position while inhaling for five counts and exhaling for five counts. Continue to breathe evenly until you reach 100 counts.

**Tip:** If 100 counts at one go is not achievable initially, start with 50, and build up from there.



### EXERCISE 4: SIDE TWIST

**Step 1:** Sit with your legs in front of you, your spine vertical and your arms reaching out to the sides slightly in front of your shoulder.

**Step 2:** With the first exhale, maintain the shape of the spine and arm position as you rotate to the side. Inhale to release the rotation slightly and exhale again to rotate further. Inhale as you return to starting position.



### EXERCISE 5: ROLL OVER PREP

**Step 1:** Lie supine and steady your lower back as you lift your feet with your knees slightly flexed. Cross your feet at the ankles. Keep your arms by the sides of your body.

**Step 2:** Exhale and without dropping the knees to the chest, roll your tailbone, sacrum and lower back off the mat sequentially.

**Step 3:** Avoid jerky movement but do a gradual roll off; breathe to control the movement. Rolling off the lower back is not easy at first. Start the exercise by rolling off the tail-bone first then building up from there. Inhale, roll down gradually and return to starting position.

**EXERCISE 6: LEG PULL FRONT PREP**

**Step 1:** Get on your hands and knees with your hands apart at shoulder distance. Keep your toes tucked under. Ensure that your spine is straight and that your head and neck follow the line of the upper back.

**Step 2:** As you exhale, press the inner thighs together while shifting your weight forward onto the upper body. Lift both knees off the ground slightly, making sure your spine is straight throughout. Inhale as you maintain control and return knees back on mat carefully.



**EXERCISE 7: SIDE BEND**

**Step 1:** Sit on one hip with the same arm slightly in front of the shoulder. Keep both knees bent with the bottom leg on the mat.

**Step 2a:** Exhale, and pressing on your feet, extend your legs fully, straightening them. Bring your spine into a lateral bend. Reach over your head with your free arm without tensing your shoulders and neck.

**Step 2b:** For beginners, instead of fully extending your legs, keep knees bent. Lift your pelvis and rest on your bottom knee.

**EXERCISE 8: TEASER WITH KNEES BENT**

**Step 1:** Lie face up with your knees bent at table top position. Place your arms overhead, ensuring that the ribcage does not pop out and is aligned to the spine.

**Step 2:** Inhale as you reach for the ceiling and nod chin slightly.

**Step 3:** As you exhale, continue to roll your spine sequentially off the mat until your weight is right behind the sit-bones. Balance with your knees kept at table top position.

**Step 4:** Inhale while maintaining your position. Raise your arms to the ceiling without your shoulders and neck tensing up.

**Step 5:** Lower arms to shoulder level and slowly roll your spine sequentially back to the mat until your spine and head have returned to the mat.

