

GET TO KNOW...

PILATES

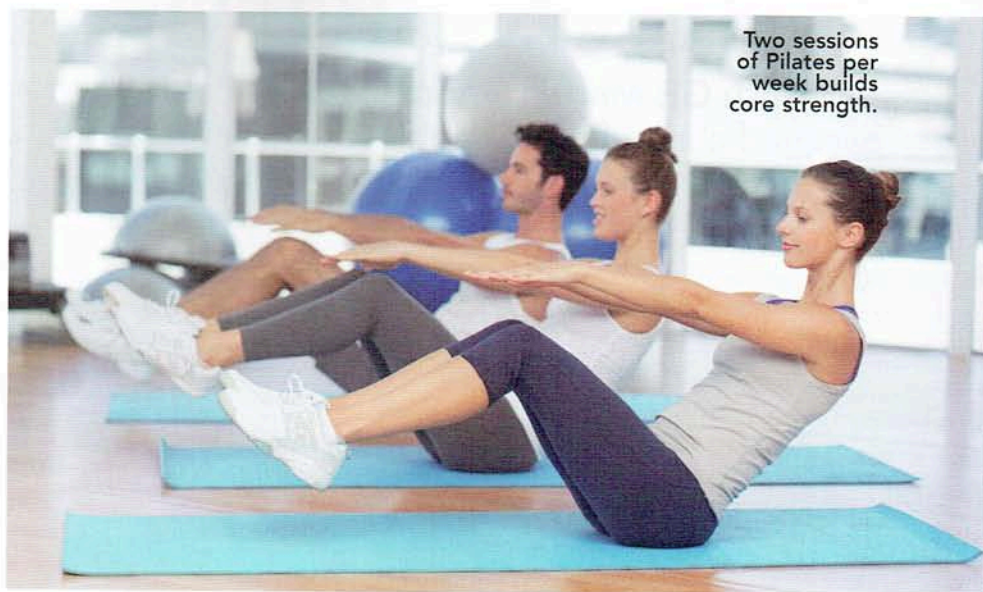
I've run for as long as I can remember but it wasn't until I became a personal trainer that I realised there was more to running than just running. To improve you need to develop other components such as flexibility, core strength, lower body and upper body strength. I'd suggest Pilates for runners – it's great for developing core strength, muscular endurance and mobility.

What are the benefits?

Most people associate Pilates with core strength, but it has many other benefits such as developing overall strength and muscular endurance, flexibility and good posture. A knock-on effect of these benefits is not only a more efficient running style, but also less chance of injury. Many Pilates exercises emphasise engaging the core muscles as they are being performed. Core strength is also developed by strengthening the muscles in the torso, hips, pelvis and shoulders. This leads to a better posture when running and improves stability in these muscles, leading to a more effective running technique. Runners' muscles can often be short and tight. Pilates focuses on lengthening and mobilising these muscles, which results in a more effective running style. Pilates is amazing for improving range of motion in the hips and shoulders. Think of how many runners you see with rounded shoulders, especially when they get tired. This is likely to be due to muscular tightness which Pilates can help alleviate. Many of the exercises you learn in Pilates should also be used as part of your warm up and cool down.

Decreased risk of injury

Poor biomechanics can lead to muscles being over or under used which in turn can lead to injuries. Unfortunately our sedentary lifestyles, the amount of time we spend sitting and also the fact that many runners don't do strengthening



Two sessions of Pilates per week builds core strength.

"Runners' muscles are often short and tight. Pilates will help to lengthen and mobilise them"

activities, means many of us have biomechanical imbalances.

Running with no strength training means these imbalances can result in injuries. Research shows that those who run regularly have a 37–56% chance of becoming injured. 50–70% of these injuries are overuse injuries. Pilates can even out any imbalances and will reduce the risk of injury, and result in a more effective running style. This means we use less energy and get less fatigued, and the extra energy can be used to run faster instead of being wasted on poor running biomechanics.

What to expect

Pilates can be performed just using body weight exercises (mat-based Pilates) or using equipment such as reformer machines. Whether you attend a mat-based or equipment-based class,

Pilates exercises are performed using controlled, flowing movements which focus on using the correct technique. Specific focus is often placed on engaging the core throughout the movement patterns and also being mindful of which muscles you are using. If you have never done Pilates, then depending on what your balance is like, expect to be a little bit wobbly. You are likely to be stronger at some of the exercises than others, which will indicate where your imbalances are.

Do I need any kit?

Pilates is often done barefoot. You don't have to invest in any special gym clothes. Leggings or joggers are fine, and I would recommend a long-sleeved top. You may want to invest in your own mat, although most classes will have mats.

How often should I do it?

If you don't do any other resistance or strength training I would recommend doing Pilates twice a week. If you already hit the gym and do strength training, then go once a week. When you are confident with the technique, 20 minutes of Pilates twice a week is really beneficial for runners.



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