

GETTING HEALTHY WITH OPTM

OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE THROUGH MOVEMENT

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Paul Christensen, DPT, OCS, ATC
Fabrice Rockich, DPT
Paul Norquist, MPT
Dan Vold, MPT

Susan Casner-Kay, MS, PT, OCS
Harold Benich, MPT
Nicole Goodwin, MPT

THE HISTORY OF PILATES

Developed by Joseph Pilates nearly a century ago, Pilates exercise has evolved into one of the premier forms of integrated physical conditioning, combining specific strengthening of the trunk musculature which current research has verified as the most effective form of spinal stabilization, with the flexibility of Yoga and the motor control of dance. This unique and comprehensive approach to movement training explains its current popularity and renders it particularly applicable to orthopedic rehabilitation.

Joseph Pilates was born in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1880. He was a sickly child, afflicted by rickets, asthma, and rheumatic fever, and devoted himself to overcoming his frailties. Over his colorful life, he became skilled in gymnastics, skiing and skin-diving; and worked at various times as a boxer, circus performer, and self-defense instructor. His interests also included Eastern forms of exercise, such as Yoga. Eventually all these merged into a method which Pilates called Controllogy (the science of control of the body). The basic premise of Controllogy was that health and fitness relied on a spine that was both strong and supple; such a spine provided the

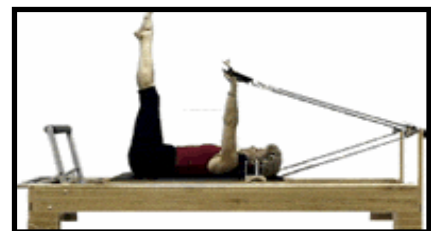
essential core for effective and elegant movement.

Joseph emigrated to the United States in 1926 and met his future wife, Clara, on the boat crossing. Clara was a nurse and their mutual interest in health and fitness lead them to open a studio in New York. His earliest students were luminaries from the world of dance, such as George Balanchine and Martha Graham. Up until the 1970's Pilates remained something of a cult activity among dancers and there remains today a deep connection between the two disciplines. In the early 1970's a student of Pilates named Ron Fletcher opened a studio in Hollywood, and the popularity of the method soared with the participation of numerous movie celebrities.

Despite its current popularity, there are many misconceptions regarding Pilates exercise. It is generally thought to require expensive equipment resembling medieval torture devices that make it unsuitable for adapting to a patient's home exercise program. While there are devices that are part of the Pilates repertoire, they are simply used to facilitate the

teaching process; the ultimate goal is to help the patient establish an independent program that uses nothing more complicated than the normal physical therapy tools, such as theraband or gym balls. Pilates is not simply a series of rote exercises, but a set of principles within which an individual advances to the ultimate combination of strength and skilled movement.

OPTM has incorporated the Pilates concept into our movement program, which is led by Harry Benich, a certified Pilates specialist and physical therapist.



The Reformer

291 E. MAIN STREET, SUITE E * LOS GATOS * CA * 95030
PHONE: (408) 354-2223 * FAX: (408) 354-2228
WWW.OPTMTHERAPY.COM