

## 15 Pilates Moves That Get Results



### Pilates for Beginners

What sets Pilates apart is its focus on toning the muscles with springs, bands, or your own body weight. Alycea Ungaro, author of *15 Minute Everyday Pilates*, shares her routine for beginners. Some moves are shown using Pilates studio equipment, but you can do most moves at home. Check with a doctor first if you're a man over 45 or a woman over 55, or if you have a medical condition.



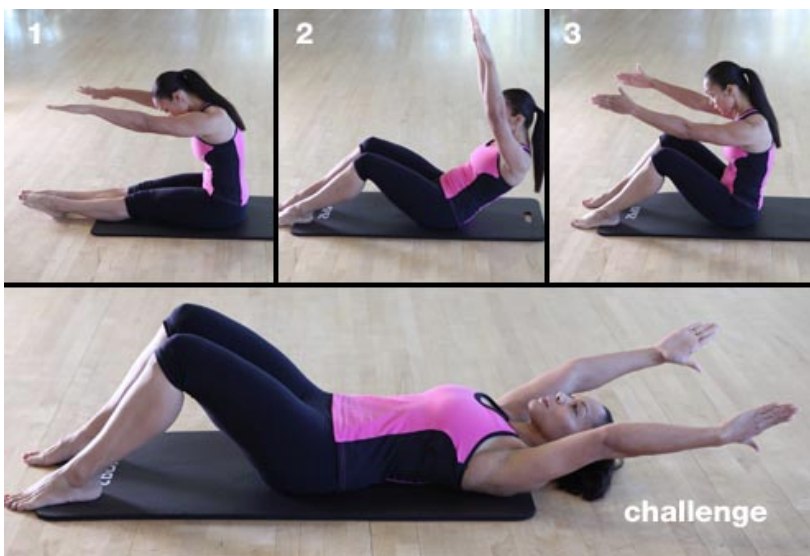
### Flat Abs: Pilates Hundred

This classic move helps flatten the tummy by using your abs efficiently. Hold on behind the knees, scoop the belly in, and curl down to the floor to get into position. Now curl the head and shoulders up slightly, lower back still pressed to the floor. Pump the arms up and down in small motions at your sides. Breathe in for five and out for five until you hit 50 pumps. Sit up and repeat for a total of 100 pumps.



### Flat Abs: Hundred on the Reformer

In a studio, you can try the Pilates hundred on a reformer, a spring-based resistance machine. Lie on your back with your legs in table-top position or extended at a 45-degree angle. Pull the straps down next to your abdomen. Curl the head and shoulders up and pulse your arms up and down. Breathe in for five and out for five until you reach 100 pulses. If any move doesn't feel right, check with a fitness professional.



## Flat Abs: Roll-Up

Begin this starter sit-up with your legs straight in front of you. Extend your arms over your legs and lower your head between your arms. Curl backward, bending your knees, and stop halfway down. Raise your arms straight up and pull your abs in tightly. Exhale and lower your arms as you curl back up. Do 6-8 reps at a moderate pace. As you become more advanced, try lowering all the way to the floor.

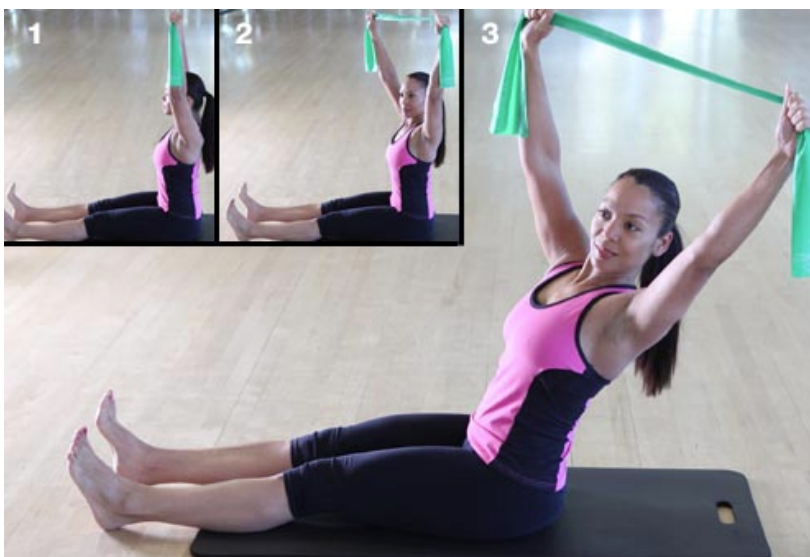
## Flat Abs: Neck Peel

If sit-ups give you a sore neck, try this alternative. Lie flat with the end of a resistance band or towel tucked under the center of your back. Bend your knees and grab the other end of the band above your head. Inhale and use your ab muscles to slowly peel your body up, letting your head rest against the band. Exhale and return to the starting position. Do five reps, making sure your abs do all the work.



## Obliques: Twist and Reach

Keep that resistance band handy for this waist-toning move. Sit with your legs a little more than hip-distance apart. Hold the band between your hands and raise your arms overhead. Exhale as you turn to one side, using the muscles in your waist. Inhale as you reach the arms out and back, keeping the hips in place. Exhale and return to starting position. Alternate for a total of four sets on each side.





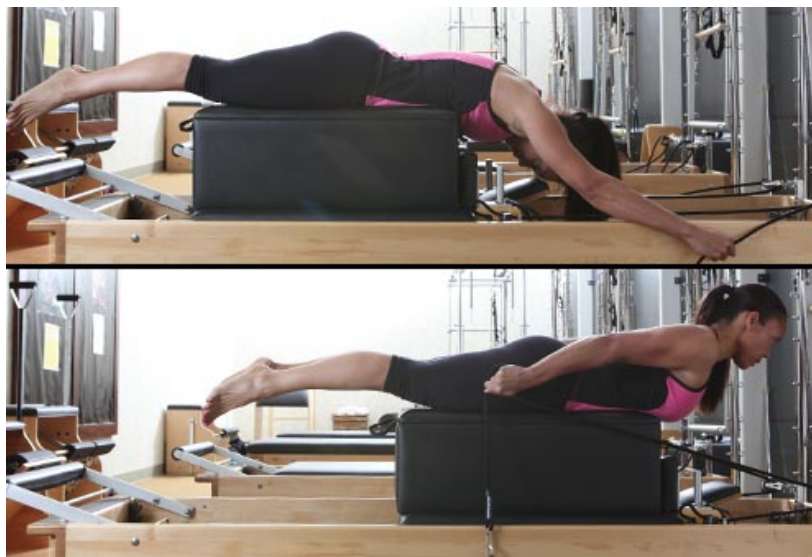
## Lower Back: Shoulder Bridge, Part 1

As you strengthen your abs, it's vital to tone the back of the body as well. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet hip-width apart. Keep your arms at your sides and raise your hips without arching your back. Tighten the muscles of your buttocks and hamstrings, and hold for five breaths. Lower down one vertebra at a time to the floor if you're stopping here, or go on to the advanced posture.



## Lower Back: Shoulder Bridge, Part 2

Keeping your hips raised, extend one leg straight up and point the foot. Kick the leg down and out, flexing the foot. Repeat, exhaling as you extend the leg up and inhaling as you kick it down. Keep your torso strong and your other foot firmly on the mat. Do five reps with each leg.



## Upper Back: Pulling Straps

Toning the upper back is the fast track to better posture. This move uses the reformer with an accessory called a long box. Lie on your stomach with your chest just past the edge of the long box. Grab the straps in front of you with straight arms. Lift the head and chest as you pull the straps down toward your hips. The long box will slide forward, with you on top. Release the arms back to the starting position. Do five reps.



## Upper Back: Letter 'T'

Want to target the upper back without a reformer? Lie face down on a mat with your feet together. Raise your head and chest slightly, and extend your arms perpendicular to your body, palms down. Exhale and sweep the arms back as you lift your chin and chest higher. Keep your waist on the mat and use your upper back muscles to bring your arms closer to your body. Return to starting position. Do five reps.



## Upper Body: Tendon Stretch

This powerful upper-body toner can be done on a mat, reformer, or Wunda chair. If using a mat, sit with your legs straight in front of you, feet together and flexed. Press your hands flat on the mat, look down, and use your upper body strength to lift your backside and upper legs. Swing yourself forward and backward before lowering slowly to the mat. Do five reps.



## Upper Body: Sparklers

A pair of small hand-weights adds punch to a Pilates workout at home. For this move, imagine you are twirling the weights like sparklers on the Fourth of July. Stand with the weights held at your thighs. Turn them slightly in to face each other and make eight small circles. Each circle should be a little higher until the hands are overhead. Make eight circles in the opposite direction as you lower the arms. Repeat 2-3 times.



## Lower Body: Kneeling Knee Stretches

This reformer exercise is an efficient way to work the entire lower body. Kneel on the reformer and round the back, keeping the arms straight. Use the butt muscles and thighs to push and pull your lower body back and forth. The platform will slide a few inches with each movement. Do five reps. As you get more advanced, do another five reps with the back arched.



## Lower Body: Kneeling Side Kicks

Here's a way to tone the thighs and butt without a reformer. Begin by kneeling. Lean to the left, placing your left hand on the mat under the shoulder and your right hand behind the head with the elbow pointing up. Raise your right leg until it is parallel to the floor. Holding the torso steady, kick the leg to the front and then to the back, knee straight. Do five reps on each side.



## Lower Body: Leg Swings

This move sculpts the legs while getting your heart rate up. Stand with your arms crossed in front of you at shoulder height. Keeping your abs tight, exhale and lift your right knee up toward the right elbow. Lower the leg quickly and repeat on the other side. Keep switching sides for a total of 10 swings with each leg.



## Stamina: Wall Chair

Besides toning the muscles, Pilates is known for boosting endurance. A wall and small hand-weights are the only necessities for this highly effective exercise. Stand with your back against the wall and feet hip-width apart. Walk the feet out a little, bend the knees, and slide down as if sitting in a chair. The upper legs should be parallel to the floor. Raise the arms to shoulder height and hold for 30 seconds. Do two reps.

Reviewed by [Michael W. Smith, MD](#) on March 10, 2014, IMAGES PROVIDED BY, Steve Pomberg/WebMD

Sources: 

### REFERENCES:

Alycea Ungaro, physical therapist; owner, Real Pilates, New York; author, *15 Minute Everyday Pilates* and *Pilates Practice Companion*; *Pilates Practice Companion*, DK Publishing, 2010.

American Council on Exercise: "Pilates Primer," "Can Pilates Do It All?"

Dina Blair, Pilates instructor; athletic director, Concourse Athletic Club, Atlanta.

Dori Ricci, NASM, CPT.

Idea Health and Fitness Association: "Pilates Moves Recruit Deep Abs Better Than Crunches."

Kidshealth.org: "Pilates."

Pilates Method Alliance: "An Exercise in Balance: The Pilates Phenomenon."

This tool does not provide medical advice. [See additional information:](#) 

© 2014 WebMD, LLC. All rights reserved.

My Notes:

