

RABBIT'S CORE EXERCISES - FOR BEGINNERS

The 'core' is the collective name for the deep postural and stabilising muscles around the waist. Strengthening these creates a protective corset of muscles for the spine and abdomen and forms a strong base for a fit and healthy body.

Pilates is very effective in achieving this core strengthening because it carefully re-educates the body into correct patterns of muscle use – in the words of Joseph Pilates "It is the mind which builds the body."

Precise positioning of the body, along with focused breathing and movement are an essential part of pilates. It can be a bit taxing at first, but it's the accurate performance of these exercises that makes them effective, so stick with it.

PREPARATION - Plan three 10-20 minute interruption-free parcels of time a week. More or less is fine – just get started and see how it goes. Lie on your back with knees up, feet flat on the floor, palms on tummy and focus on your breathing and on letting your body relax. Let any areas of tension melt into the floor. Be aware of your body.

BREATHING - As you breathe in use the breath to expand your lower rib cage wide sideways like a bellows, As you breathe out soften your breast bone, relax your shoulders and let the bellows come together. Repeat 10 times.

CENTRING - This is how you create a strong, stable centre through the pelvic floor and lower abdominals.

'Zip up and Hollow' – Imagine a zip at the front of your abdomen from your pubic hair to your belly button. As you breathe out you zip this up and hollow these muscles and your pelvic muscles back towards your spine.

Practice Preparation, Breathing and Centring So **breathe in** and **expand** the bellows (ribs up and out) and **breathe out** - release the bellows, **zip and hollow**. Once it comes naturally move on to the exercises below.

I have put together some straight-forward, yet very effective exercises to start with. Once these are mastered you can add the advanced ones that I have also prepared. You'll need to focus, as unlike many other fitness regimes in Pilates we perform the active part of the exercise whilst breathing out!

CURL UPS



Lie with feet flat on floor, knees up, one hand behind head and one flat on stomach. Relax.

Breathe in and expand breath into sides of rib cage.



Breathe out – zip and hollow. Imagine holding a peach under your chin and slowly lift your head.

Breathe in, expand. Let your head down. Repeat 5 times.

CURL UPS – TO THE SIDE



Lie with feet flat on floor, knees up, Both hands behind head. Relax.

Breathe in and pull breath into sides of rib cage

Without moving imagine your right shoulder is attached by a piece of string to your left knee.



Breathe out as you zip up and hollow.

Imagine the string between your shoulder and knee shortening

Breathe in/expand and let the string lengthen and head drop

Repeat 5 times each side

THE DART



This takes 2 breath cycles!

Lie on your front, with cushion under forehead.

Breathe in, keep chin tucked in, and head lengthening away from the spine

Breathe out, zip and hollow, pull shoulder blades down into your back, hands lengthen towards feet, tighten inner thigh – continued in next column...



Keeping feet on the floor

Slowly raise the head and shoulders off the floor a few inches. Keep spine straight and maintain position for a

breath in feeling **Breath out** maintaining the **zip hollow and stretch** and finally **breathe in and lower**

Repeat 5 times.

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