

Valerie Patrick, owner of Core Pilates & Yoga, Cicero, demonstrates the Pilates Cadillac. The apparatus has bars and cables that allow students to do core-strengthening Pilates exercises while suspended. Photo by Margaret McCormick



THE POWER OF PILATES

Do what Martha Stewart does to stay in shape

By Margaret McCormick

Martha Stewart made headlines and history in May, when she was featured on the cover of the annual Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue, wearing a white one-piece suit with a plunging neckline and a poufy, peach-colored cover-up. "To be on the cover at my age was a challenge," Stewart, 81, said on NBC's "Today" show. "And I think I met the challenge."

To rise to the challenge of being the oldest cover model to ever grace the magazine, the cookbook author, media entrepreneur and lifestyle maven turned her attention to diet and fitness — and not a fad diet or the latest exercise craze. Stewart limited carbs like pasta and bread and took Pilates classes a couple times a week. "I went to Pilates every other day and that was great," Stewart noted, adding:

"I'm still going to Pilates every other day 'cause it's so great."

Stewart isn't the only celebrity fan of the low-impact, mind-body exercise. Actors like Scarlett Johansson and Kerry Washington have said they fit Pilates into their fitness routines, and athletes like Tiger Woods have embraced Pilates to strengthen their bodies and, hopefully, their game.

Pilates isn't new, and it wasn't developed to get people swimsuit-ready for magazines. The method takes its name from German-born Joseph Pilates, who developed his system of exercise and body conditioning, combined with attention to breathing, more than a century ago.

In 1912, Pilates left Germany for England. He was interned by the British as a German enemy alien at the onset of World War I and made

productive use of his time in prison: Pilates went to work in a hospital ward and attached springs to hospital beds so bedridden patients could condition and tone their muscles. That was the humble beginning of the apparatus known as the Pilates Reformer, which is still in use today.

Pilates moved to this country in 1923 and settled in New York City, where he opened an exercise studio with his wife, Clara. Early students included dancers George Balanchine and Martha Graham, who turned to Pilates exercises to help recover from injuries. Pilates called his method of movements and breathing "Contrology," because it involves both mental and physical focus. "It is the mind itself which builds the body," he liked to say.

Today, you can find Pilates reels



Martha Stewart, who appeared on a recent cover of Sports Illustrated, said one of the ways she stays in shape is with Pilates classes.

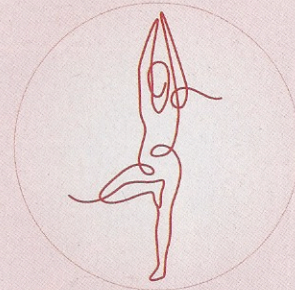
and videos on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and on apps like the 28-Day Challenge. But it's a good idea, for beginners especially, to take classes with a certified instructor. That way, you'll learn how to execute each exercise properly and understand how that exercise can help your body. It's also a good idea to consult your physician before beginning a new program.

Valerie Patrick, owner of Cicero-based Core Pilates & Yoga, says Pilates and yoga are often grouped together, but there are differences between the two exercises. Both modalities offer stretch and strength, she says, but

Pilates focuses more on strengthening the deep core muscles that attach to the back. It's a full-body workout that takes aim at the small muscle groups that are often neglected during weight training.

Like yoga, Pilates can be done on a mat. But it also can be done using specialized equipment like the Pilates Chair, Tower, Reformer and Cadillac.

"Pilates can be more of a workout than yoga, depending on the instructor and type of yoga," Patrick says. "It's very core based, focused on the abdominals, glutes, back and hips. It tones your midsection very well. A lot of doctors recommend Pilates for



Pilates: Where to Go to Take Lessons

Some places to take Pilates in Central New York include:

- **Core Pilates & Yoga**, Cicero: Virtual Pilates and yoga group classes, as well as semi-private and private Pilates and yoga sessions and private sessions using Pilates apparatus. Information: 315-480-9727, <https://corepilatesyoga.com>

- **Metro Pilates**, downtown Syracuse: Pilates mat and Pilates Reformer sessions in a variety of formats. Information: 315-426-8917, <https://metropilatesstudio.com>

- **Elevate Fitness**, DeWitt and Liverpool: Pilates mat classes and small group and private classes using Pilates apparatus. Information: <https://elevatesyracuse.com>

- **Precision Pilates**, Fayetteville: Classes in a range of formats and sizes, including mat and Pilates equipment. Private sessions available. Information: 315-409-5542, www.precisionpilatescny.com

- **Vyana Yoga**, Manlius: In addition to yoga, the studio offers Pilates mat classes for all levels. Information: 315-692-4471, www.vyanayoga.com

- **Sky Yoga Studios**, Syracuse and Skaneateles: Mostly yoga, with some Pilates classes offered as well. Information: www.skyyogastudios.com

This list is not intended to be comprehensive.