

## BEGINNERS HOME EXERCISES PROGRAM

### FIND NEUTRAL SPINE

All joints are safest at or around their "mid-point"/neutral.

Before we can find "Neutral", we need to explore the full range of pelvic tilt.

Imagine you're lying on a large clock, 12 is under your belly button and the 6 is under your tailbone. Tilt your pelvis to the 12 (*toward your head- see diagram*). Now tilt to the toward 6 (*tilt towards your feet - diagram*).

Caution! Do not push beyond the level of mild discomfort! Now come back to the centre of your pelvic range of movement. You should still have a small natural arch in your back (*not quite enough to get your fingers under*).

**An even distance between 6 and 12. This is Neutral spine.**



Tilt towards 6



Tilt towards 12



Neutral Pelvis

### TRANSVERSUS ABDOMINUS - "Zip and Hollow" (*the core of Pilates teaching!*)



The main muscles of lumbo-pelvic stability are the Transversus Abdominus, the Pelvic Floor muscles, and the Multifidus. Many other muscles play a role too. These muscles are too deep to be obvious, so you need special training to learn how to activate them.

To activate the transversus abdominus, lie on your back with hips and knees bent, and find pelvic neutral, as described above. Put both your index and middle fingers on your front hip bones, and move in toward midhne an inch.

Now imagine that you have to zip up a very tight pair of jeans by drawing in the lower half of you tummy - remember, not too strong! Feel the abdominals "flatten" under your fingers. Hold for 2-3 breaths, repeat 10x.

### LEG SLIDES



#### Start Position

1. Lie on the floor with your hips and knees bent
2. Pelvic Neutral
3. Anchor your shoulder blades.
4. Chin gently tucked.



#### Action

1. Zip and hollow and breathe in.
2. Breathing out: slide your right leg away from you while keeping your pelvis absolutely still.
3. Breathing in: maintain "Zip and Hollow", and at the same time, return the leg to the start position.
4. 10 times each leg!



**BENT KNEE FALLOUT**



**Start Position**

1. Lie on the floor with your hips and knees bent
2. Pelvic Neutral
3. Anchor your shoulder blades.
4. Chin gently tucked.



**Action**

1. Zip and hollow and breathe in.
2. Breathing out: let your right knee open slowly to the side. Perfectly still pelvis!
3. Breathing in: let the knee return to the centre.
4. 10 times each leg!

**DEAD BUGS**



**Start Position**

1. Lie on the floor with your hips and knees bent
2. Check that you are in Pelvic neutral
3. Anchor your shoulder blades.
4. Chin gently tucked.



**Action**

1. Breathe in to back and sides
2. Zip and hollow, and breathe out while bringing your right knee up.
3. Breathe in while maintaining "Zip and Hollow". Breathe out while the leg returns to the start position.
4. 10 times each leg!

**QUADRUPED**



**Start Position**

1. Kneel on all fours, hands under shoulders, and knees under hips
2. Pelvic Neutral
3. Anchor your shoulder blades.



**Action**

1. Breathe in and maintain a long spine.
2. Zip and hollow and breathing out: slowly slide your left leg and right arm away until they are straight. Do not go beyond horizontal. The pelvis does not move, you remain in neutral spine. Imagine you have a tray of drinks sitting on your back and you don't want to spill them !
3. Breathing out: Return the leg and arm
4. Repeat 3-5 times alternating sides.

**Watch Points**

- Hollow the abdomen!
- The arm and leg do not rise beyond horizontal.
- As far as possible, the pelvis remains stable and does not tilt.
- Keep the shoulder blades gently anchored.
- Keep the neck long and relaxed and with a gentle chin tuck.

## CHEST LIFTS



### Start Position

1. Start lying on your back with knees bent up. In a neutral spine position.
2. Lightly cradle the base of your skull with the fingers of one hand and perform the chin tuck. Imagine a soft peach under your chin!
3. Place your other hand on your lower abdomen to check that it does not bulge upward. Anchor the shoulder blades.



### Action

1. Zip and hollow and breathe in.
2. Breathing out: Lift your chest off the ground by drawing your ribs to your hips. You should feel this in your upper abdominals.
3. Make sure that the tail bone stays down on the ground (*pelvic neutral*).
4. Breathing in: slowly curl back down.
5. Repeat three to five times each side

## BOOK OPENINGS



### Start Position

1. Lie on your side with your head on a pillow, and knees and hips at about 45 degrees from straight.
2. Stack each joint directly over the other, (*ankles, knees, hips and shoulders*). Don't let your waist sink to the ground.

### Action

1. Breathe in and lengthen through the spine.
2. Zip and hollow as you breathe out.
3. Apply the shoulder blade anchor, and breathing in, lift the top arm up and over behind your back. Do not force it. Follow your hand with your eyes. Concentrate on keeping the pelvis and lower legs absolutely still.
4. Breathe out as you bring the arm back around to its start position. Repeat three to five times each side.



## ARM ARCS



### Start Position

1. Lie in the Relaxation Position (*see diagram*).
2. Keep your feet and knees in line with your hips, or a little wider if that is more comfortable.
3. Lengthen your whole spine, gently anchor your shoulder blades, and breathe through back and sides.



### Action

1. Zip and hollow, and breathe in during the arm movement.
2. Keeping the lower part of your chest against the ground: Raise both arms up and over to point at the wall behind you. Don't worry if your arms do not touch the ground. Keep the lower part of your chest down.
3. Hold the arm position for two breaths.
4. Repeat 3-5 times alternating sides.



### What it does

- Stretches the Latissimus dorsi and (to a lesser extent) the teres major.
- Stabilizes the mid back when under challenge from arm movement.

## BRIDGING



### Start Position

1. Lie in the Relaxation Position with your feet slightly apart and 30 cm from your buttocks.
2. Pelvic neutral, arms by your side.
3. Optional - small ball or towel between knees.



### Action

1. Breathe in, then zip and hollow. Maintain the zip and hollow throughout the exercise.
2. While breathing out, slowly curl the tailbone off the floor a little.
3. Hold the position and breathe in.
4. While breathing out, slowly curl the spine back down onto the floor.
5. Repeat 6 times.



### What it does

When a healthy back bends, each joint moves equally, and the stresses are shared equally. If one intervertebral joint has been damaged and has "forgotten", its flexibility, its neighbours have to bend that much further, so that they too are more likely to sustain damage. Wheeling the spine "teaches" the joints to share the load evenly.



## THE DART



### Start Position

1. Lie on your front with small pillow under your forehead if you wish.
2. Arms at your sides with palms facing inward. Legs together and toes pointing.
3. Anchor your shoulder blades.

### Action

1. Breathe in, zip and hollow, imagine there is an egg under your stomach which you do not wish to break and lengthen your spine, especially the back of your neck.
2. Tighten buttock and thigh muscles.
3. Breathing out, pull your shoulders downward, and up off the floor.
4. Breathe in and hold while maintaining a long body.
5. Breathing out, slowly lower your head and shoulders.
6. Repeat 3-6 times

