

Study Finds Pilates Helps Back Pain Sufferers More than Other Therapies

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Low-back pain is the most common cause of job-related disability in the United States, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Odds are, you're among the sufferers of this pervasive, chronic and painful health condition — and you're always looking for better ways to find relief without taking pain medication all the time.

One method worth trying? Pilates.

Recent research supports what many Pilates experts and aficionados have been saying for decades: That doing Pilates is not only great for sculpting a strong, lean body — but also for preventing and treating low-back pain.



Pilates for preventing and treating low-back pain

According to a small, randomized, controlled study published in the Journal of Orthopedic & Sports Physical Therapy, participants who practiced Pilates over a four-week period experienced more relief from their symptoms than those who went through typical treatment programs.

In light of the growing popularity of Pilates in therapeutic settings, researchers from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, decided to test whether Pilates exercises were effective in improving the condition of patients.

The investigators randomly assigned 39 active adults ages 20–55 with chronic low-back pain to either a Pilates training group or a control group. The experimental group exercised on Pilates equipment, while the control group received the usual care provided to individuals seeking medical help for low-back pain. ("Usual care" included consulting with a physician and other healthcare professionals and specialists.)

Post-testing revealed that the Pilates participants had significantly lower levels of functional disability and pain intensity than the control subjects. And a year later, the Pilates participants had maintained their physical improvements.