

Getting Reformer Results to Power Up Posture

BY DAYNA STODDART



I have been working with Penny Thompson for some time now on a fitness program using a machine called a reformer. Penny admitted that she's not an exercise room person, nor does she really enjoy group classes. She prefers one-on-one training and supervision so the reformer was the ideal solution.



"My goal was to improve my physical fitness and flexibility so I could continue to enjoy playing golf and tennis," said Penny

The reformer was invented by Pilates founder Joseph Pilates. It is a bed-like frame with a flat platform called the carriage which rolls back and forth on wheels within the frame. The carriage is attached to one end of the reformer by a set of springs. The springs provide choices of differing levels of resistance as the carriage is pushed or pulled along the frame. The carriage has shoulder blocks that keep its user in proper alignment, promoting good posture.

At the spring end of the reformer, there is an adjustable bar called a footbar which can be used by the feet or hands as the client moves the carriage.

The reformer also has long straps with handles that are attached to the top end of the frame. They can be pulled with legs or arms to move the carriage. The reformer's parts are adjustable for different body sizes and different levels of skill.

One of the best things about the reformer is its versatility. Exercises can be done lying down, sitting, standing, pulling the straps, pushing the footbar, perched on the footbar, perched on the shoulder blocks and with additional equipment, upside down, sideways, and all kinds of variations. In other words, the reformer can train many parts and dynamics of the body in many different ways with just one relatively sleek piece of equipment.

Although the reformer is often used in Pilates classes, we have discovered that it can also be a great rehabilitation tool allowing one to progress at a gradual pace. The various sets of springs and slings can be adapted to different tensions and weights to ensure a safe workout. Penny and I usually work for half an hour once a week. Each session starts with some lower body leg presses to warm up the hips, knees and ankles. Throughout the session we work on stability and mobility. After the lower body warm-up we work on the upper body. For example, Penny has some shoulder issues from repetitive use. We use weights and slings to strengthen her rotator cuff and focus on the shoulder girdle stability and mobility.

We then work on key foundation exercises doing variations on the plank. For every exercise I make sure that Penny is properly balanced and performing correctly. She has now become quite seasoned and has a very good mind/muscle connection. If she is not in balance or aligned, she has the sense to self-correct. We don't do a whole lot of repetitions; we focus on quality not quantity.



Sun Care: Hydration and Sun Screen Tips

BY JAN RICHARDS



"Two years ago I started at a very basic, gentle level. This has been a gradual process to get me to the point that I can do things such as planks and advanced situps. I've actually become a bit of a contortionist," Penny said. Penny realizes how important resistance training is with a focus on building and maintaining good posture. Having a strong core is key. If you don't have a strong core you set yourself up for future injuries. "What I like about this program is that it's gentle but progressive. My flexibility and range of motion have improved and I've incurred no injuries. Generally I have a great sense of well-being. Like many people, there are times when I don't feel like going to the gym, but once I come and do my workout I feel great. I also like the one-on-one training because it means I will be pushed according to my ability. For example I can now do a full plank. A couple of years ago that would not have been possible," said Penny.

Dayna Stoddard offers complimentary fitness assessments to all residents. If you are interested in a personal training program, head over to the Recreation Centre to make an appointment. Dayna also instructs group classes at the Recreation Centre that address posture and core work with a gently graded progression.

"I encourage you to come out and try a class. Having a Ball is on Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.; Body Balance is on Thursdays at 8:30 a.m.

DO YOU KNOW that your skin is the largest organ in your body? The outer epidermal layer provides a waterproof barrier to protect you from infection and the inner dermal layer cushions your body from stress and strain. Your skin is your body's coat and needs to be hydrated and protected from the sun.

DO YOU KNOW that dehydration can be associated with heat exhaustion, heat stroke and even death? Everyone needs to exercise caution, especially the elderly, diabetics, and those with lung conditions and cardiac disease who are at an even greater risk of dehydration in warm weather.

YOU MUST TAKE SPECIAL CARE ON HOT DAYS.

- Avoid strenuous activity especially at the warmest hours of the day
- Drink plenty of fluids – eight eight-ounce glasses (two litres) of water/day
- Wear loose clothing and a hat
- Maintain your hydration and proper nutrition

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEATSTROKE.

1. Rapid heart rate
2. Lack of sweating
3. Confusion
4. Light-headedness or fainting

As we age, our skin becomes thin, sensitive and weak. For proper sun protection we need to apply one ounce (shot glass size) of sunscreen to our exposed skin 15 minutes before we go outside. The Sun Protection Factor (SPF) should be 30 or greater. Sunscreens with a higher SPF offer more protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays, which are linked to the vast majority of skin cancers, premature skin aging and eye damage. If your skin is exposed to daylight – directly or indirectly – you need to apply sunscreen every two hours.

DO YOU KNOW that over 80,000 cases of skin cancer are diagnosed every year in Canada, of which, more than 5,000 are melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer? There are more new cases of skin cancer each year than the number of breast, lung, prostate and colon cancers combined, costing the health care system \$531,750,000 – over half a billion dollars. The majority of people diagnosed with melanoma are white men over the age of 55. (Source: The Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation).

So don't forget to **hydrate** and to **protect** your body's coat from the sun!