

# BODYTalk



The "Open Leg Rocker" is performed by Morris (r.) and Johnson. Many studios offer professional training sessions as well as mat classes.

called mat Pilates, which relies on more calisthenic-type exercises and stretches.

Private training sessions on the machines can range from about \$50-\$120 an hour. Mat classes range from \$15 to \$25 each and are sometimes free with a health club membership.

The benefits of the regimen include increased strength, flexibility and endurance, and also improves posture, alignment, coordination and balance, says Linda Spriggs, an instructor at the Power Pilates studio in the Equinox Health Club in Chicago. Spriggs, a professional dancer who began teaching Pilates six years ago, says the technique can also help with chronic injuries.

"Pilates is truly from the inside out," says Spriggs, who is certified in the form that adheres to the classical method. "It's a tremendous workout that makes you face your own weaknesses and overcome them."

For New Yorkers Suzanne Morris, 34, and Damien Johnson, 21, the benefits of Pilates have been astonishing—although in different ways.

Morris, director of satellites and technology for HBO, says she started Pilates a few months ago because a knee injury prevented her from running.

"Within a month-and-a-half, the knee pain was completely gone," says Morris, who is running 12 miles a week. "It seems like every time you think you've mastered a pose, there's always a way to take it to the next level."

Johnson, a professional ballet dancer in his first season at the Dance Theatre of Harlem, has been dancing for about six years and started Pilates at the recommendation of one of his ballet instructors about three years ago.

"It just made my 'center'—my abs—so much stronger, and it makes my back much looser, and I have more range of motion," says Johnson, who does one-on-one sessions about twice a week. "It makes me feel like I'm taller and longer. I love it."

More and more people are starting to agree.

—Kimberly Davis

## 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PILATES

- Pilates is an equipment-based exercise technique that has been adapted for mat use. Experts recommend that you try at least one or two private sessions to better understand the basic principles.
- Results do not come quickly. Founder Joseph Pilates always said: "In 10 sessions, you will feel the difference. In 20, you will see the difference. And in 30, you'll have a whole new body."
- Pilates began as a form of rehabilitation, and recent studies suggest that it may speed recovery for some conditions because of its focus on body alignment and posture. Check with your doctor before beginning any kind of exercise routine, particularly if you are battling injuries.
- For athletes, the benefits include more efficient movement, increased endurance, speed and quickness.
- Nothing in Pilates is forced or repetitive; you emphasize correct form rather than going for the burn.