



# FOCUS PILATES STUDIO

## **The Power of Pilates** **Helping Women with Breast Cancer**

Breast cancer is currently the most widely diagnosed cancer in women world wide. This sobering fact impacts us all, not just as Therapists and Pilates Instructors serving others, but also is likely to hit close to home.

Breast cancer for women is a double insult. Not only is it a life and death issue, it can threaten gender identity. The intimate environment of Pilates can bring a person into full healing so that a survivor can truly go on to thrive in life.

According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately 2.4 million women had been treated for breast cancer . Fortunately, thanks to early detection and advancements in treatment, many more women will survive breast cancer and go on to live out their natural life expectancy. Despite this good news, cancer treatments take an enormous toll: in just a year of treatment, the body can age a decade. Between the inherent weight gain, muscle atrophy and premature bone loss, women are left weak and physically challenged even by normal day-to-day activities.

### **Why Pilates?**

Pilates is a gentle restorative exercise regimen perfectly suited for women as they recover and work to rebuild their bodies. (The benefits also extend to the very small minority of cancer patients who are men.) Pilates excels in the postural re-education and muscle-balancing necessary to recover from other side effects of breast cancer treatment. It can help alleviate pain from operative procedures, restore joint mobility and tissue integrity, as well as provide a safe progression to regain lost strength. Most importantly, goals should involve returning to activities of daily living that make life meaningful. The key to the success of a Pilates program is to proceed slowly, consistently checking with the client to see how she feels. Developing a continual dialogue will ensure that the client is not taking on more than she can handle. Since there is very specific work to be done in each case, it is important to stick to the program. This is not a time to take risks or be creative, which might exacerbate the client's condition. Just as crucial is your bedside manner; there is a strong emotional element when working with breast cancer survivors, and positive reinforcement from the wellness professional is vital in all phases. Pilates strengthens the body-mind connection, which is essential through the recovery phase.

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## Pilates Benefits for Breast Cancer Survivors

- Improves lymphatic drainage with proper breathing techniques
- Improves shoulder girdle mechanics, specifically scapula-humeral rhythm, to aid in the breakdown of scar tissue and frozen shoulder
- Restores overall range of motion, flexibility, strength and endurance
- Restores upright postural alignment and balance
- Increases strength of local and global stabilizing muscles
- Enhances core strength and endurance
- Improves overall kinesthetic awareness
- Re-establishes proper muscular firing patterns
- Reduces both physiological and emotional stress
- Improves appearance
- Increases self-confidence and overall well-being

At Focus Pilates we excel our clients with simple, effective exercises, we provide them with the tools they need to become self-reliant, to enjoy a higher quality of life and to be more functional in everyday activities. Whether it means picking up groceries, doing laundry, taking a walk, catching a plane or dancing at a daughter or son's wedding—we all want our clients to live their lives to the fullest.

This article is dedicated to some of our valued clients that recently been diagnosed with breast cancer and to those who have been in remission for some time. Our hearts are with you.

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