



The Pilates Method for Brides

Being the "perfect bride" is a role that many brides attempt to play but soon find that the fantasy is a tough reality. Everything from checking things off the weekly wedding to-do list, to remembering to eat healthy while sticking to the get-in-shape-for-the-dress workout regimen takes a toll on your body, mind and spirit. **By ALANA REED**

Last summer, while Chicago bride Jennifer Wainstein was getting ready for her autumn wedding at the Standard Club, her schedule left her feeling like she needed a body-double to get everything done. In addition, she chose a fitted strapless gown that would showcase her upper back, arms and stomach.

Jen quickly realized she needed not only some time to relax, but a weekly fitness routine to look her best on her big day. This is where Pilates is beneficial; it gives you the best of both worlds. So, Jen slowed down her hectic schedule with Pilates sessions twice a week. "So many things were running through my head during the day I just needed a 'me hour,'" exclaimed Jen. "I was able to totally zone out, get into Pilates mode and in the process, transform my body."

Many brides tend to crash diet, which is incredibly unhealthy, or try to commit to a rigorous workout schedule that they won't be able to actually stick to for many obvious reasons. However, Pilates is the perfect pre-wedding workout as it not only slims your physique, but it also helps calm and quiet the mind. It's a total body experience.

Pilates worked for Jen because it toned her arms and shoulders without making her look bulky. Most women love the way Pilates changes their silhouette since the maneuvers give the body a long lean look. Every Pilates move incorporates some type of strength movement and stretch movement. This way the muscles never stay contracted and never have the chance to bulk.

The Pilates Method, composed of over 400 different exercises, is done with precision and low repetition, ultimately relieving the mind of whether or not the wedding



program was double, triple and quadruple-checked! While doing Pilates, the mind is forced to focus on the body's movements and breathing as a form of meditation. For stressful brides, this differs from mindless exercises (since they ARE mindless) which, in turn, makes them hard to stick to.

Below are five Pilates maneuvers that can help transform your stomach, shoulders, arms, chest and back for a knock-out body on your wedding day:

The Roll Up. Start by lying down on your back with your legs straight and on the floor. Squeeze your inner thighs together. Lift your arms straight up to the ceiling. Lift your head and begin peeling your spine off the floor. Your stomach should be scooped in throughout the entire roll up. To make this exercise more challenging, slow it down. Take 10 counts to lower and 10 counts to roll up. Repeat six to 10 times.

The Hug. Sit up tall with your legs crossed (shin in front of shin). Lift the arms out to the sides so that the hands are just slightly sloping down from your shoulders. Imagine

hugging a big oak tree. Reach your arms out and around the tree. Return to start. Repeat six to eight times.

Leg Pull Up or Reverse Plank. Sit on your bottom with your legs extended out in front of you. Bring your hands approximately five inches behind your bottom. Fingers can either point toward your legs or out to the sides. Lift your bottom off the ground. Bend your elbows and then push up. Perform three sets of 10.

The Pilate Push-Up. Assume the standard push-up position, face down onto your hands and toes. Heels are squeezing together. Hands are directly under the shoulders. Elbows bend into your sides and then straighten the arms. Don't let the elbows open out to the sides. This is a triceps push up. Make sure that the lower back does not sink. Stomach is scooped in. Perform three sets of four.

Swimming. Lay down on your stomach. Extend your arms over your head. Lift arms and legs off the ground. Lift the right arm and left leg highest. Now switch. Perform five to 10 on each side with a total of 10 to 20.

Alana Reed (www.AlanaReedPilates.com) works with clients nationwide to strengthen core abdominal and lower back muscles (a.k.a. the Powerhou). Alana has a Masters Degree from The Columbia University of Social Work and was certified in the Pilates method by Romana Kryzanowska, the world's leading Pilates instructor and one of five living original protégés of Joseph Pilates.

Finding Time To Tone Your Body and Mind