

# PILATES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH PHYSIOTHERAPY



ASSOCIATION OF CHARTERED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

## BASIC CONTRACTION

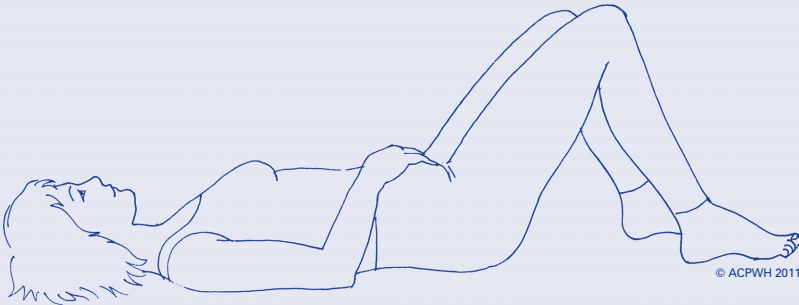
### Transversus Abdominis

All the following exercises build on this basic contraction. Although it is basic it isn't always easy to master.

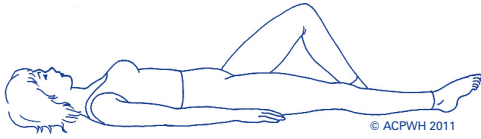
1. Lie on your back with knees bent at a comfortable angle, back and ribs soft, feet flat on the floor.
2. Find neutral spine.
3. Find the bony prominence at the front of the pelvis above the hip on both sides and palpate each side firmly with the tips of your middle and index finger, move the fingers towards the middle one inch and down one inch.
4. Gently breath in to your tummy (referred to as belly, abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing). Your Physiotherapist may need to teach how to breathe this way. Keep the ribs and back soft and as you breathe out very gently, just 30-40% draw in your tummy button towards the spine. You should be able to feel the muscles under your fingertips stiffen. Make sure your spine remains neutral. If you are not sure what you are feeling do a small cough and you will definitely feel these muscles.

Take one or two normal breaths then gently relax the tension in these muscles.

You can also try this exercise in side lying with knees and hips bent at about 45 degrees, sitting or standing, experiment to find the position you most easily feel the muscle stiffen. Side lying is often the easiest position to start.



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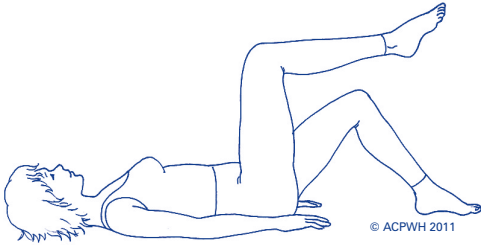


**1.** .....

Breathe in, breathe out and engage deep abdominals and pelvic floor. Gently slide one heel away from you, keeping the heel in contact with the floor.

Breathe in and on your next breath out gently draw heel back to starting position. Keep the pelvis perfectly level and stable throughout the movement.

Repeat ..... times each leg. (Alternate legs).

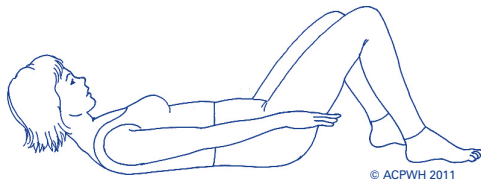


**2.** .....

Breathe in, breathe out and engage deep abdominals and pelvic floor. Lift one leg so the hip and knee rest at 90 degrees. Breathe in, breathe out and gently lower leg to start position.

Keep the pelvis perfectly level and stable throughout the movement. Release the pelvic floor and abdominals before repeating the exercise.

Repeat ..... times each leg. (Alternate legs).



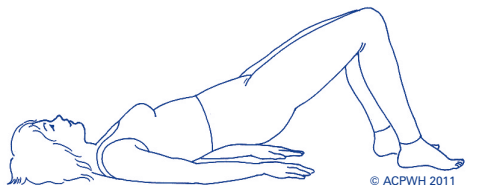
**3.** .....

Breathe in, breathe out and engage deep abdominals and pelvic floor.

Gently lift head and look through knees, reach finger tips towards heels. Breathe in, breathe out and slowly lower to start position.

Be careful not to strain around the neck or bear down on the pelvic floor. Release the pelvic floor and abdominals before repeating the exercise.

Repeat ..... times.



**4.** .....

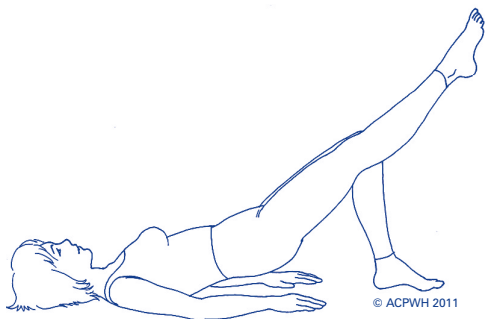
Breathe in, breathe out and engage deep abdominals and pelvic floor.

Very gently roll the pelvis from the coccyx.

Imagine you are lying on a strip of Velcro peeling yourself from bottom to top, vertebra by vertebra. Breathe in, breathe out and gently roll back to start position.

This may be a very small movement at first.

Repeat ..... times.



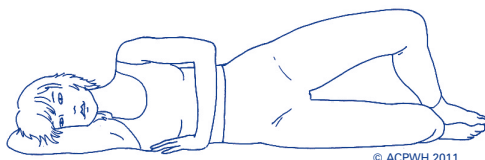
5. ....

Carry out the pelvic curl, keeping the pelvis level and steady and gently straighten one leg.

Do not prop the knees together. A rolled towel or balloon between the knees may help, but not to be squeezed.

Breathe in, lower leg, breathe out and slowly roll spine and pelvis back to start position.

Repeat ..... times each leg. (Alternate legs).



6. ....

In side lying with neutral spine.

Breathe in, breathe out and engage abdominals and pelvic floor.

Without allowing the pelvis to roll back at all (imagine you are balancing a full glass of water on your uppermost hip) gently lift upper leg, keeping ankles together.

This may only be a very small movement at first.

Breathe in to hold and breathe out to gently lower, release abdominals and pelvic floor.

Repeat ..... times each side.



7. ....

In side lying with neutral spine.

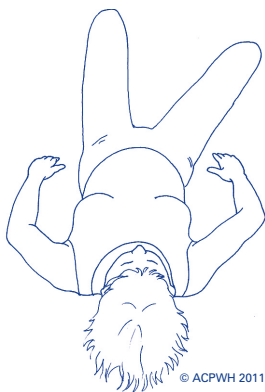
Start with arms together resting on floor on the same side as the thighs.

Engage abdominals and pelvic floor. Breathe out and lift upper arm to open chest and rotate spine. Keep your eyes on the moving hand and the elbow soft.

Aim your moving arm towards the floor but only taking it as far as is comfortable.

Breathe out to return the arm to start position with same arc movement.

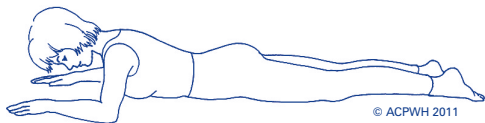
Repeat ..... times each side.



## 8. ....

Breathe in, breathe out, engage abdominals and pelvic floor, allow one knee to gently move away from midline. Be careful not to use the still leg to brace the pelvis. As soon as you feel any movement in the pelvis hold that range, breathe in to hold, breathe out and return to neutral, releasing abdominals and pelvic floor.

Repeat ..... times each leg.



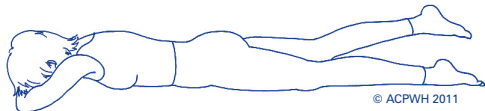
## 9. ....

Breathe in, breathe out, and engage abdominals and pelvic floor.

Slide shoulder blades gently down towards waist and lift head away from floor (keep eyes looking down towards floor).

Breathe in to hold, breathe out to return to start position.

Repeat ..... times.



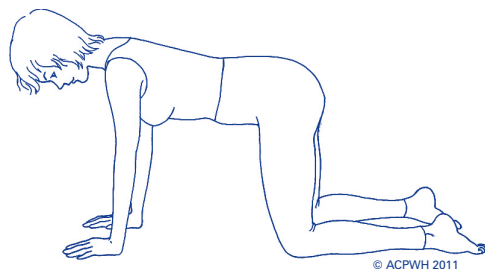
## 10. ....

Breathe in breathe out and engage abdominals and pelvic floor.

Slowly lift leg WITHOUT further extending lower back.

Breathe in to hold and slowly lower on next out breath.

Repeat ..... times each leg. (Alternating right and left).



## 11. ....

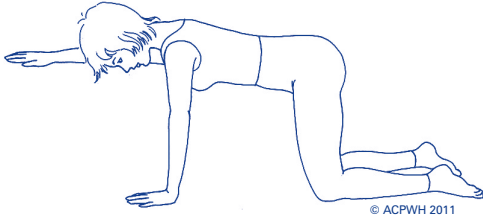
On hands and knees with wrists positioned below shoulders and knees below hips, back neutral.

Allow tummy to relax (without sagging lower back).

Breathe in to prepare, breathe out and gently lift navel to spine and engage pelvic floor.

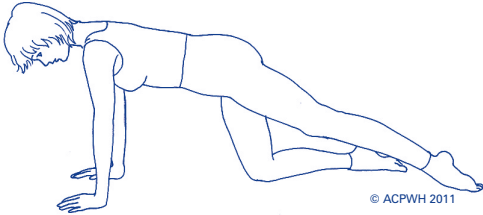
Breathe in to hold, breathe out and slowly release.

Repeat ..... times.



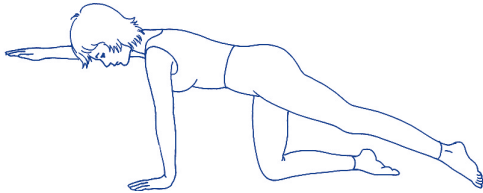
**12.** .....

Maintain navel to spine as in 4 point kneeling exercise and on out breath gently raise one arm. Keep spine straight but soft. Breathe in to hold, breathe out and lower arm, release abdominals and pelvic floor.  
Repeat ..... times alternate arms.



**13.** .....

Maintain navel to spine as in 4 point kneeling. On out breath gently stretch leg behind keeping toe in contact with floor. Breathe in to hold, breathe out and return to start position releasing abdominals and pelvic floor.  
Repeat ..... times alternate legs.



**14.** .....

Maintain navel to spine as in 4 point kneeling. On out breath combine arm and opposite leg stretch. Hold on in breath. Breathe out and return to start position, release abdominals and pelvic floor. (A further progression would be to raise the leg in line with the spine.)  
Repeat ..... times each side.



**15.** .....

Check weight is evenly distributed over both feet and that they are comfortably parallel, hip width apart. Soften (gently unlock) the knees. Check your pelvis and lumbar spine are neutral. Keep the trunk soft but gently lengthening in the spine. Keep the chest nicely open by keeping the shoulder blades down. Allow the neck to lengthen.



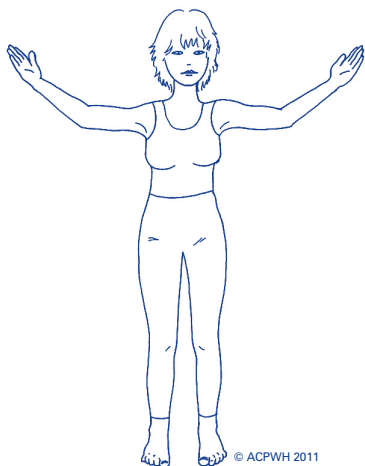
## 16. ....

Either stand as described for 'standing posture' or gently lean against a wall with the spine and back of the head in contact.

Breathe in, breathe out and allow the chin to lower towards the chest. With loose arms slowly roll down imagining you are rolling vertebrae by vertebrae. Roll down as far as is comfortable without causing discomfort in the back.

Hang and breathe in, gently unroll and return to the start position as you breathe out.

Repeat ..... times.



## 17. ....

Stand as described for 'standing posture'.

Breathe in and avoid being tense in the shoulders or neck.

Breathe out and slowly raise the arms, reaching in front and then opening wide to the sides.

The shoulder joints will rotate as you move your palms to face the ceiling.

Keep the bottom of the shoulder blades down and be careful not to hunch the shoulders as the arms are raised.

Breathe in as you lower the arms to the start position.

Repeat ..... times.

This leaflet was compiled by members of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Women's Health. It is used as a teaching aid in the ACPWH approved workshop '**An introduction to Pilates in women's health physiotherapy**'.

The ACPWH acknowledges that there are many different organisations / individual teachers/physiotherapists using pilates exercises wholly or partly as part of a fitness regime. The leaflet can be used by a physiotherapist, as an adjunct to teaching either a physiotherapy colleague or a patient/client how to perform a pilates exercise.

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