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## Reform, Perform, Transform

**Vicky Wong** discovered how Pilates can transform your mind and body. Now she wants you to as well.

**H**aving taken up Pilates a year ago now, I feel the need to evangelise on its benefits. For Bangkok-based enthusiasts of the exercise regime, the **pilatestudio** has no serious competitors.

Or-yah Avni and her husband started the **pilatestudio** in early 2005. "We wanted to raise the Pilates standard in Bangkok, where anybody can claim to be a teacher," Avni explained. In fact, she is the only fully qualified Pilates teacher trainer in the city, and has worked at the internationally-acclaimed Physical Mind Institute in New York City. The Pilates teacher training course at the **pilatestudio** in Bangkok is very intense: it involves 400 hours of training and observation in the space of 15 weeks.


Originally a fitness and rehabilitation regimen, Pilates was founded during the First World War by German Joseph Pilates, who created an exercise system out of bedsprings and bedposts to help bed-ridden soldiers exercise. Pilates combines techniques like yoga, breathing and martial arts into an effective form of exercise. Every move focuses on using the 'core', or traverse abdominal muscles, which go far deeper than the six-pack. They are activated by pulling in one's belly, and no matter which part of the body one is using, strength should always be generated from there.

Pilates also creates a 'true strength' in the deep layer of muscles around the spine, which allows it to be better stabilised and supported. "It's excellent for people with back problems and it also corrects posture and alignment," Avni explains. "Once you're on the Pilates machine [called a reformer], all your natural tendencies become obvious, and with proper correction, general pains will eventually disappear."

I had a tendency of rolling my shoulders forward and therefore used to have knots between my shoulder blades. When I was told during a class to roll my shoulders back and pull my scapular down, I became aware of the tendency; over time, I corrected my posture. I no longer have back pain.

As the body and immune system become stronger, the mind also becomes more balanced: Pilates trains you to concentrate in order to integrate body and mind, increasing awareness of your body by toning it (unlike weight-lifting, which creates bulky muscles). "Muscles are like elastic; Pilates stretches the muscles, making them long and strong at the same time," Avni adds. The difference between gym work and Pilates is evident. As opposed to a normal post-workout exhaustion, Pilates leaves me feeling so much more energised.

Similar to Pilates in that it is practised on mats and machines, gyrotonic is also available at the **pilatestudio**. Invented 20 years ago, gyrotonic works the body in a three-dimensional way, with spiralling actions of the spine maximising the range of motions. Both the reformers and gyrotonic machines add assistance and resistance, targeting the right muscles and making the exercise safer and more effective; mat classes are good for stretching out the whole body.

The **pilatestudio** also offers fit ball classes and Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, which involves a smooth flow of movements as opposed to static poses. For new parents, there are also pre- and post-natal classes. Shiatsu massages are available too. 



The **pilatestudio**  
[pilatesbangkok.com](http://pilatesbangkok.com)