

More Versatility, Small Footprint

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Products at Work
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Balanced Body's new Pilates unit offers another option.

By Allyson Cabot, PT, Dawn-Marie Ickes, MPT, and Gabrielle Shrier, MPT

As partners in an integrated wellness center who have used Pilates in our practice for nearly 9 years, we believe this method is one of the most effective and powerful approaches in physical therapy. Its principles go hand-in-hand with orthopedic rehab, and it meets the needs of common conditions, from herniated discs to hip injuries to neuromuscular disorders.

More clinicians are realizing the clinical and financial benefits of Pilates. However, many are still reluctant. The first question we hear from rehab directors and practice owners is, "I'd like to add a Pilates component, but I don't have the space."

We always respond with the same answer. Although there are many Pilates options for a space-limited practice, we think the Clinical Reformer/Tower combination from Balanced Body offers the greatest variety of applications.

The Reformer and Trapeze table are the most versatile pieces in the Pilates equipment repertoire. The Reformer is the most well-known. Consisting of a carriage in a frame that glides forward and backward using springs for resistance, the Reformer accomplishes several exercises in supine, seated and standing positions.

Balanced Body's Reformer is designed for physical therapists. We've always liked its versatility. Its footbar and springbar systems give you more than 160 adjustable, locking positions. This allows you to accommodate clients of different height and abilities, including children. The Reformer also gives you an [accounting](#) benefit, since it qualifies for a [Medicare](#) tax write-off.

The Tower component combines the Reformer and Trapeze table, although the trapeze portion is limited to a half wall or "tower" on one end. The Reformer is hidden underneath two removable tabletop mats, and it increases the [exercise](#) options. Mats can also be used on the floor for mat work.

The unit is ideal for smaller practices because it rests within a workable footprint—27 inches wide, 93 inches long and 79.5 inches high with the Tower. You can choose from a frame height of 14, 18 or 24 inches. It can fit in a 10-by-10-foot space, with room to spare. The unit easily converts between modes, and the combinations allow therapists to work on all parts of the body.

Pilates facilitates breathing and thoracic mobility, improves circulation, approximates the joints, improves flexibility, and integrates the neuromuscular system. You can focus on integrating the whole body by strengthening the upper and lower extremities while maintaining core stability.

Functionally, the repertoire can strengthen and stabilize the trunk and extremities in supine, sitting, kneeling, quadruped and standing postures. To modify a program, you can adjust the difficulty level and height of the springs.

We recently treated a 40-year-old recreational tennis player for a rotator cuff tear secondary to an impingement syndrome. He had given up tennis because of the pain.

Although the patient had never tried Pilates, we began working with him twice a week with a combination of manual therapy, modalities and Pilates for 20 to 30 minutes per session. We centered on exercises that built on each other for pelvic stabilization, and concentrated on returning range of motion to the shoulder with and without equipment.

Next, we strengthened his upper body with scapular stabilization and pelvic stabilization in neutral. We added an overhead component for the upper extremity and a rotation component to the trunk.

Within the first 4 weeks, the patient was able to resume tennis while avoiding overhead motions. After 8 weeks, he was back playing tennis, although he still felt restricted. By discharge at week 12, he was back playing in full force, pain free.

The versatility of the Reformer/Tower allows us to create exercise sequences that give clients a full-body, therapeutic movement experience.

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