

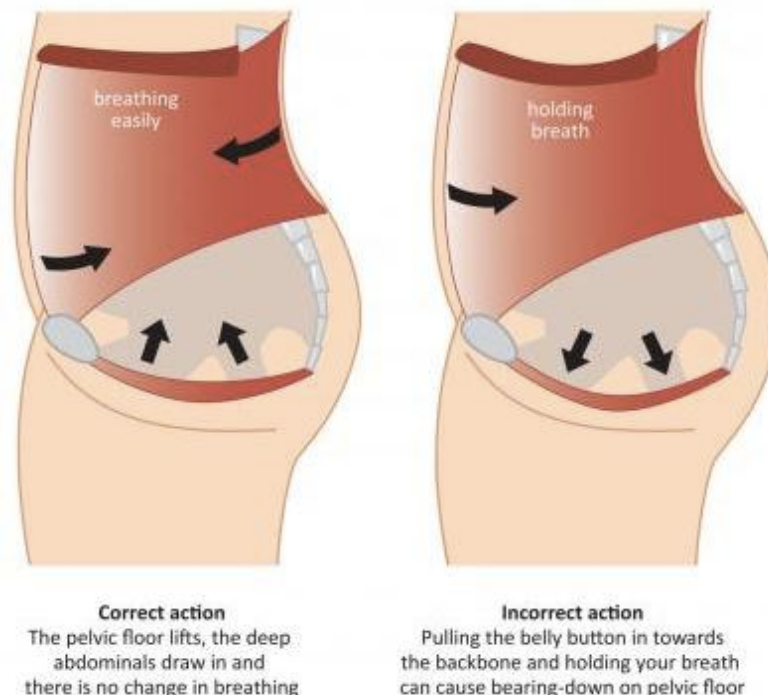
Pilates Belly Fix Workouts

A strong core and solid foundation of shoulder and pelvic stability is a must for everyone who wants to remain injury free and retain good functional mobility in their body.

These Pilates workouts are designed specifically for mature women although anyone would gain some benefit from these exercises. You should always be thinking about “lengthening” through your spine and keeping abdominals braced.

I recommend two different methods of bracing abs. The first is the contraction of your pelvic floor muscles. These are recruited by “drawing up” the inner muscles that control your bladder.

My favorite teaching analogy when describing this action is that of imagining you’re catching up with a close friend and hearing some exciting news – you have a full bladder but you really want to hear her exciting story. You don’t think twice, you “lift and hold on” and all unknowingly, you’ve just started to activate deep postural back and abdominal muscles as well.



Our second method of bracing is a little stronger. Imagine a playful friend gently poking you in the stomach and taking you by surprise. Without thinking, you tense your tummy muscles. You've just "braced" your abs. This is an easier method of bracing during strong movements like planks. What I do want you to be careful of using this bracing method, is that you don't want to pull in your stomach muscles and "bear down" on your pelvic floor. Lift your pelvic floor FIRST, then brace the stomach muscles for your best abdominal strengthening and pelvic floor protection.

While pelvic floor muscles are "endurance" muscles, they are not designed to be activated all the time. Like any other muscle, they get tired! The most important point you could take away from the workouts is recognizing HOW to switch on pelvic floor and to recognize when those muscles have relaxed. Your pelvic floor is intended to stabilize your lumbar spine so you'll really want to know how to effectively use these muscles when you're doing anything that involves exertion or strain.

Imagine the pelvic floor muscles as a round mini-trampoline made of firm muscle. Just like a trampoline, the pelvic floor is able to move down and up with tension. The trouble starts when that trampoline "mat" loses tension and is unable to adequately support the visceral organs and bladder in particular. Although the pelvic floor is hidden from view, it can be consciously controlled and therefore trained, much like our arm, leg or abdominal muscles.

If you struggle to control pelvic floor and have a history of leakage or incontinence I highly recommend you discuss this with your Doctor and see a specialist Physiotherapist in Women's Health for the correct recruitment of these muscles. Like any other muscle, if you strengthen pelvic floor, it will get stronger.

Watch the videos and follow the tempo and breath patterns. Muscles relax on an "exhale" so practice releasing breath as you stretch; an "inhale" sets up the movement and prepares you to work. As a rule of thumb you should be able to breathe normally when working hard – the suggested breathing pattern is to protect your back and teach mindfulness of pelvic floor practice.

We also want you to feel stable through your pelvis – this prevents injury, falls, and improves balance and overall movement. You'll see a lot of exercises that focus on one side of your pelvis rather than both – hips are not created equal!

You may find that you're quite strong on one side of your body and really struggle on the other side – we need to make sure both hips are working equally.

The same regard needs to be given to your shoulder stability. If your right arm can easily reach above your head but your left arm can only reach half way then let's concentrate on the left arm and allow it time to catch up to the stronger side. The same goes with the pelvis. If there's a huge disparity in strength between one hip and the other, we need to invest the time in strengthening the weak side to find balance.

Find a quiet place with comfortable flooring or a good mat. Ensure you are wearing comfortable, stretchy clothes that allow for ease of movement. Spend several minutes warming up your body and you're ready to move into the workout and concentrate on your body.

I prefer that you listen to your body in terms of number of reps. You can follow along with the videos for time or go with my suggested range of approximately 10 reps in the main workouts, but you should be aiming for quality over quantity. If you feel tired and feel that you're losing control of the movement then stop and stretch. Return to the movement when you feel you can move with control.

I really want you to come out of these workouts feeling taller, stronger and more stable. You should see an increase in your strength, range of movement and an easing of muscular stiffness and strains.

Lisa B & Shawna K

Warm Up

Always spend **at least 3-5 minutes warming up** your body and preparing your muscles for the workout ahead. Complete the following:

WARM UP – Repeat x 3	
March on the spot briskly	30 seconds
Supported leg swings	10/side
Double Shoulder Circles	10
Torso Twists/Rotations with heels lifted	10/side
Rolling Down	60 seconds

Your heart rate should be slightly elevated and you're ready to go.

Pilates Core Matwork:

Equipment: Mat, small cushion for under head (optional)

Duration: Allow for 20 minutes plus warm up

For best results please follow along with the video workouts.

Aim to complete 10 reps of each movement – your goal should be quality not quantity. If you feel benefit then do more reps if you want. If it feels too hard, then do fewer reps.
Hip rolls – narrow feet
Hip rolls – feet mat width apart
Glute Bridges for Mobility
Lying Stick Ups
Lying Hip Openers Right
Single Leg Circles Right
Lying Hip Openers Left
Single Leg Circles Left
Side Lying Clams Right
Side Lying Clams Left
Bird Dog – Left arm/Right Leg*
Bird Dog – Right arm/Left Leg*
Side Plank with ‘squat’ Right
Side Plank with ‘squat’ Left
Alternating Cobra and Childs Pose stretches

Finish with a glass of water and notice how you stand a little taller and straighter each time you complete this session.

*** Modify this exercise in the following ways if desired:** If you have wrist or knee issues you can change the Bird-Dog to lying flat on the floor in a ‘Superwoman’ pose. See exercise library for photo.

Pilates Core for Balance & Stability:

Equipment: Stability Ball, clear wall or door space

Duration: Allow for 20 minutes including warm-up

For best results please follow along with the video workouts.

Aim to complete 10 reps of each movement – your goal should be quality not quantity. If you feel benefit then do more reps if you want. If it feels too hard, then do fewer reps.
Seated shoulder rolls and hip circles
Wall/Ball Squats – 5 Narrow, 5 Wide – repeat this twice
Wall/Ball Push ups
Wall/Ball Squats with Overhead Reach
SB Lunges Left
SB Lunges Right
Wall Stickups
Seated Ball Alternating Leg Floats
Kneeling SB Ab-Rollouts OR Elbow Plank
SB Bird Dog – Alternating Arm/Leg Extensions*
Seated SB Hula Hoops – alternate directions
Seated SB Chest/Back Stretches

* If you are uncomfortable with the pressure of the stability ball under your stomach, you can alter this to a four point kneeling Bird-dog exercise or Superwoman. Demonstration in Finishers videos or Exercise Library.