

Home Exercises for the Summer Part 2

After several hours hard at work on your Pilates routine, it's time to up your game! You are now ready to layer on more complex exercises focusing on: lateral rotation and flexion of the spine on a stable pelvis; improved shoulder mobility on a stable thoracic spine, and improved range of motion in hip, knee and ankle joints.

I. Stabilize and Strengthen – Shoulder Girdle Work

Working with a resistance band is an excellent way to release tension in the shoulders and develop more strength in all the musculature of the shoulder girdle and upper back. Here are two examples:



1) Shoulder Girdle Stabilization – Elevation and Depression – Arms Overhead.

Wrap band around hands, approx. shoulder width apart

1. Arms overhead, elevate and depress the shoulders; feel scapula and collarbones widening as shoulders are lowered
2. Hold shoulders down, and press out on band with pinkie fingers - postural work, feel latissimus working
3. Single arm pull down – “hook” one arm down only, keeping other arm fully extended overhead; feel bicep and tricep work as you lengthen out of shoulder girdle





2) Shoulder girdle release & spine extensor work.

Open hands a little wider and try to rotate them all the way back behind you to stretch the shoulders and pectorals; drop head down and feel upper back and neck stretch; lift head back to center and nod left and right to release neck.

Bring arms overhead again in alignment with ears and narrow hands slightly; pulse the arms backwards, just slightly behind ears and feel the spine extensors working. Be careful not to move the neck & head as this movement is performed.



3) Shoulder girdle stabilization – protraction & retraction.

Wrap band around hands, approx. shoulder width apart, arms extended in line with shoulders.

1. Pro/retract the shoulders
2. Stabilize in retraction, and press out on pinkie fingers



4) Rotator cuff.

Wrap band around hands, bend elbows to 90° palms up, & pin elbows to waist. Rotate arms externally keeping elbow to waist, forearms parallel to the floor. This is a pivot in the glenohumeral joint (shoulder).

To progress movement, rotate only one arm out at a time, and add an upper torso rotation to activate the obliques. Be careful to keep the hips square as movement is performed.

Repeat at least 8-10 reps of each of all Theraband upper body series.



5) Standing Lunge with Shoulder Extension.

Step on the end of the band and use the opposite hand to take the other end of the band; the legs should be positioned in a side lunge; keep the bent knee over the 2nd toe (i.e. don't roll the ankle). Externally rotate the arm with the band out to the side as in previous rotator cuff exercise, keeping elbow glued to the waist, then extend arm out on the diagonal. Keep active in the core and don't throw the shoulder out of alignment; maintain good control through rotator cuff muscles and latissimus dorsi as the shoulder extension is performed. This exercise also promotes lower extremity endurance and pelvic stability.

Repeat 8-10 times on each side.

After performing the Abdominal Series from Home Exercises for the Summer Part 1, layer on the following:

I. Contract – Abdominals with Rotation



6) The Saw. Start in a long sit position with legs extended shoulder width apart, arms out to the side. Lengthen the spine, and without moving the legs or pelvis, rotate the ribcage and arms to the right, then reach the left hand to the outside of the right foot; the right arm will extend back, and the gaze should be directed to the outside of the right thigh. Activate the core muscles, scooping deeply across the pelvis as you perform this movement, pulsing once in the rotation. Roll back up and return the torso to center. Repeat to the left; complete 3 to 6 sets of this movement. This will also promote hamstring flexibility.



7) Single Leg Teaser with Rotation. For a more advanced challenge, sit upright with knees bent, heels in alignment with sit bones, arms outstretched in front. It is helpful to squeeze a small ball between the knees for pelvic stability. Extend one leg from the knee until it is fully outstretched, simultaneously lengthening the spine; don't collapse in the lumbar. Rotate the arms and ribcage to the right on a deep exhale; feel the ribs narrow and imagine the torso as a coiled spring. Shoulders and arms remain even, and the neck soft. Twist towards and away from the extended leg. Return to center and repeat with the other leg.



8) Side Plank with Lateral Flexion. Start seated on right hip, propped up either on elbow or hand, depending on the degree of challenge desired. Knees are slightly bent, legs stacked on top of each other. Press the feet firmly into the mat, and on a deep exhale lift the hips, straightening the legs and taking the spine into lateral flexion. The top arm reaches over the ear. Note that the deeper the knee bend in the starting position, the more the spine can arc laterally at the top of the movement. Keep sliding the supporting shoulder blade away from the ear – don't over-recruit the upper trapezius muscles. Bend the knees and return to starting position. Repeat 3-4 times on each side.



9) Mermaid. Sit in a "z" sit position with the left leg in front, right knee out to the side, shin wrapped behind you. Try to anchor both sits bones firmly into the mat to keep the pelvis even. Place the palm of your left hand on the floor beside your left hip and let your right arm form a gentle arc out to the side, palm up. Exhale and lengthen up out of your hips and through the crown of your head. Inhale as you raise your right arm overhead alongside your right ear, stretching as far as you can over to your left side. Your left elbow bends, but don't worry if it doesn't reach the mat. Be sure to lift up through your torso to allow more space for side bending. Be side to keep the abdominals pulled in and pelvis slightly tucked under. This is a completely lateral movement to stretch the side ribs, so be sure not to come forward as you side bend. Inhale and come back to the vertical position, with your arms out to the side. Pass through this position, keeping the movement flowing. Each time you pass through the vertical alignment, be sure your shoulders are aligned squarely over your hips for an instant. Exhale to curve to the right, raising your left arm overhead. Bring your right arm in front of your waist as you stretch to the right (forearm on thigh, palm face up). Change legs. Perform 3 to 5 Mermaids on each side.