



Karlie Kloss



Adriana Lima



Candice Swanepoel

Your Best Body

'In Five Weeks It Transformed My Body'



Look's Editor Ali Hall attended three Reformer Pilates classes a week at Pilates Nation for three months...

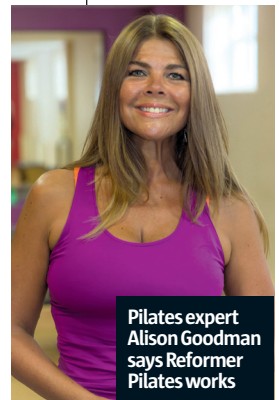
'I've always been a gym bunny – I love running and working out – but recently all the years of exercise began to take their toll and I hurt my back, badly. With a three-year-old at home, I barely had the time to exercise as it was, and now it hurt too much to try. It was only after trying regular, mat-based Pilates on my osteopath's recommendation, and finding it too slow, that I decided to give Reformer classes a go.

Admittedly, I'd never heard of Reformer Pilates, but when I was faced with a series of old-fashioned, wooden machines that resembled something you'd find in a torture chamber, it looked like what I needed to challenge my body. I had no idea what I'd let myself in for. By the end of my first 55-minute class, I was sweating and my limbs felt stretched and worked out from top to toe – but my mind felt yoga-calm and totally stress-free. And I still had enough energy to play with my daughter that evening.

The physical results were just as fast. Within a month, my body felt lean and toned and, after five weeks of classes three times a week, my back felt completely healed. To put that into context, I'd been going to physio for three months and had nowhere near as much success. Apparently a lot of people only start Reformer Pilates when they've injured themselves exercising, but if you go to one class a week alongside your regular workout, you're considerably less likely to hurt yourself in the first place. I just wish I'd started sooner. Now I'd never give it up.'

#SUPERWORKOUT Why Reformer Pilates Could Reshape Your Body

It's credited with creating catwalk bodies and only takes 55 minutes a week. Look investigates whether Reformer Pilates can live up to its reputation...



Pilates expert Alison Goodman says Reformer Pilates works

What do Karlie Kloss, Candice Swanepoel and Adriana Lima have in common? Nope, it's not an unlimited supply of Victoria's Secret knickers, Taylor Swift's number on speed dial or even the countless tally of catwalks they've shared this season. It's their jaw-dropping, super-toned, million-dollar bodies. And we've got their body-sculpting secret: Reformer Pilates. Yep, hit pause on your planking and forget everything you thought you

knew about Pilates. These 55-minute classes are hardcore and it's all thanks to 10 pieces of equipment, with weights, springs and pulleys, designed to stretch you (and your muscles) to the limit. 'In LA and New York, Reformer Pilates studios are hugely popular, and you'll find that most models attend one-on-one classes to shape their figures,' explains Alison Goodman, whose north London-based studio, Pilates Nation, runs private sessions as well as classes for up to 10 people at a time. 'The root of classical Pilates is

resistance, which trains and tones your muscles. Sure, on a mat you can get this from your body strength, but if you use a combination of specially weighted pieces of equipment, you'll get a more challenging – and effective – workout.' And it's from one piece of equipment that RP gets its name. Resembling a bed frame, the Reformer has a sliding carriage and adjustable springs, cables and pulleys that allow you to work out standing up or lying down. It's not the only apparatus – there's the Guillotine, the Cadillac and the Electric Chair, too.

'The machines do look a little scary!' laughs Alison. 'Especially because – regardless of how fit you are – in your first session, you will end up working muscles you haven't exercised for years. But you'll soon get used to the way they gently nudge your body, keeping it in the right position.' Each session begins with some mat work before moving onto the apparatus, switching machines depending on what your body needs that day. And if you're worried about aching limbs, fear not: 'Pilates is designed to be a daily workout – by working the smaller muscle groups, it won't leave you too sore and unable to move afterwards!'

'The supermodels love Reformer Pilates because of the way it shapes the body,' adds Alison, who is developing a new cardio-based Pilates called Springtone, launching in mid-October, to make fans sweat it out even more. 'Each move is especially designed to train a different muscle group – your abs, lower back, hips or buttocks, for example. Unlike other forms of exercise, you won't build defined, bulky muscles. Instead, by extending your muscles to their longest length,

you're stretching them out for a streamlined, toned appearance.'

One area Reformer Pilates is especially fantastic for is your abs and waist. 'Most traditional stomach exercises focus on your six pack,' says Alison, 'whereas RP works the deeper, smaller muscle groups at your core. This creates an inbuilt corset effect: shaping and sculpting a waist where there may not have been one before.'

If a nipped-in waist and model-length legs aren't enough to get you rushing to the studio then the ballerina posture will. 'Women are always reporting back how much taller they're walking, how they feel lighter on their feet and are suffering from fewer headaches and less backache,' adds Alison. 'Pilates trains your body to look after itself long after you've left the studio.' Look, walk and stand tall like an angel? We're sold.

Now It's Your Turn...

- For more information, follow @pilatesnationuk on Twitter
- Visit Pilatesnation.co.uk
- Call 020 8444 5244

Your Toning Tools

Meet the nine other pieces of equipment used during a Reformer Pilates session

- 1 Cadillac:** No, not the classic car! With leg and arm springs, loops to hang from and even a trapeze, this gives an all-over workout.
- 2 Pedi Pole:** A long metal pole with suspended handles that you hold on to, moving your body up and down.
- 3 Guillotine:** A terrifying name but fun to use! This is a blade-less weighted guillotine that you lift up and down, using your arms and core for strength.
- 4 Wunda Chair:** Basically a box with one side that can be pressed down, like a pedal, for leg work.
- 5 Electric Chair:** Similar to the Wunda Chair but with a supportive back to bolster the spine during standing exercises that build strength and stability.
- 6 Small Barrel:** Used in a similar way to an exercise ball, you lie with your back over this half-moon barrel to open and stretch your spine.
- 7 Ladder Barrel:** Balancing on your front on top of a tall barrel (resembling a gym horse), use your arms to push and pull up and down the ladder in front of you.
- 8 Magic Circle:** A smaller piece of equipment, this ring is used to create arm resistance.
- 9 Foot Corrector:** Resembling a pedal, this is designed to strengthen and lift the arch of the foot, improving balance and gait.

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