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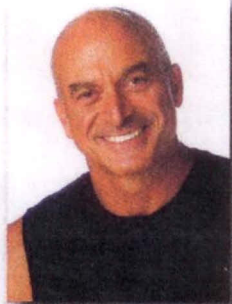
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ask the experts



benefits of posture assessment •
the best time to practice • cold water
vs. room temp • late-night eating



BY RAEI ISACOWITZ AND JACKIE KELLER, CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH

Q: *Lately I've been hearing a lot about posture assessments. My instructor never gave me a formal assessment, and I was wondering if I should get one. Would it be of benefit?*

A: Posture assessment should be an ongoing and integral part of your Pilates training. The term "formal assessment" may be misleading, however. I do not believe you need to be assessed with sophisticated equipment or tests, though your posture should

dictate your fitness regimen and the choice of exercises involved. This is an ever-evolving process, and one that will certainly benefit your practice and your well-being.

Your Pilates teacher should view every exercise as a tool of analysis. The execution of each movement conveys a wealth of information about your posture, movement habits and imbalances—and we all have some—which can then be translated into the design of your program. For example, take two

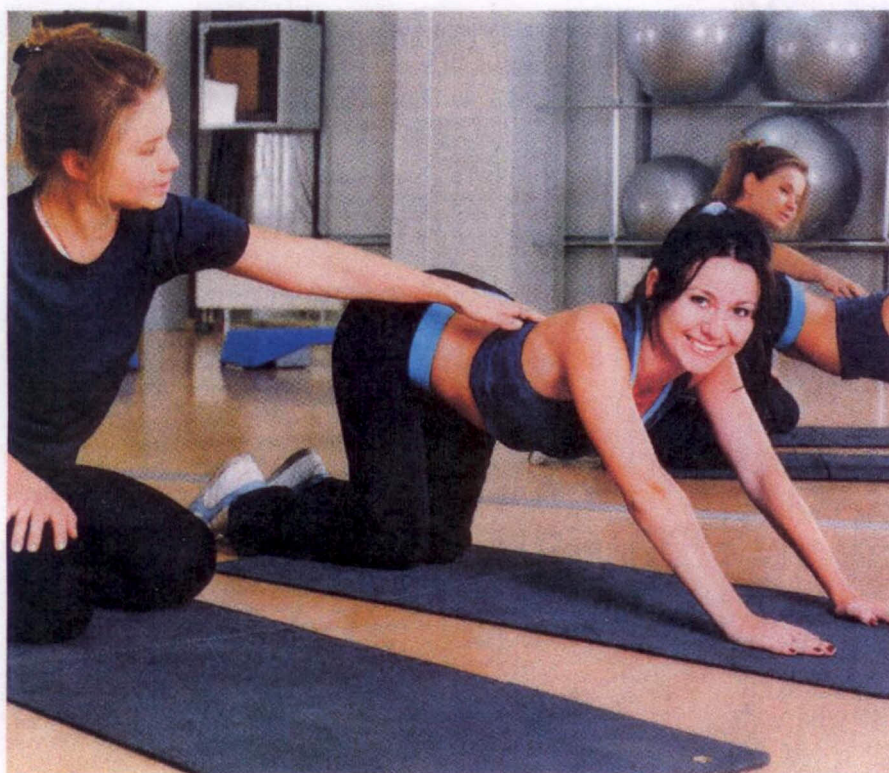
common posture types, hyperlordosis and flat-back posture. The choice of exercises and even the emphasis in each exercise would differ substantially. These posture types are accompanied by a very different set of patterns in terms of tightness and weaknesses.

This is a fascinating area of study, one that can greatly help in bringing about the desired changes you may be aiming for in your Pilates practice. You may even stand an inch or two taller! —R.I.

Q: *All things being equal, when is the best time of day to practice Pilates? And if I'm also doing cardio, weight lifting, etc., what's the best way to schedule a balanced week?*

A: I do not believe there is an across-the-board best time to practice Pilates. The decision depends on individual preference as well as both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. We all have our personal biorhythms. Some people are morning people while others are night people.

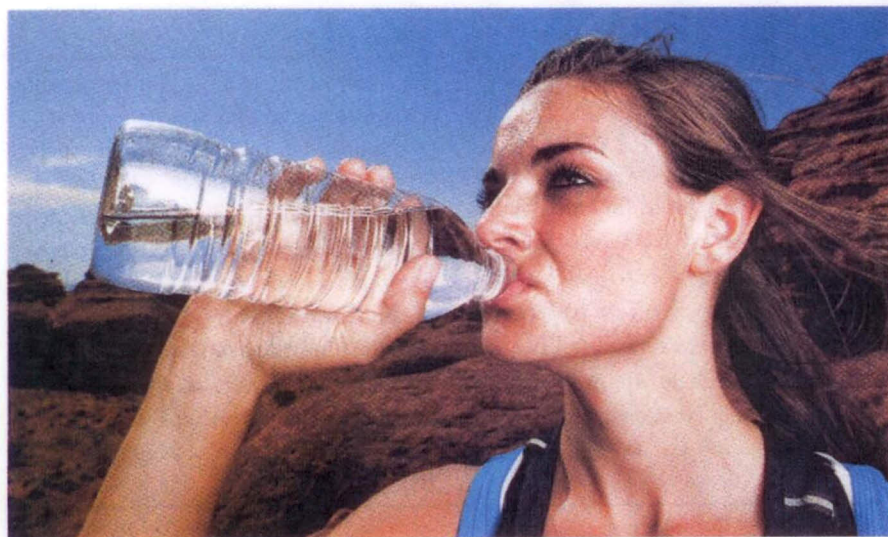
I personally love the early morning. I get up between 4:30 and 5:00 a.m., and I love doing a mat session then—it sets me up for the day. But my morning sessions are typically mellower than those later in the day. I also do not typically work out after 6:00 p.m. On the other hand, some people love evening sessions. Work, kids and other



such factors will also dictate when you practice. The key is to make practice a part of your life.

To a degree, balancing your Pilates practice with cardio and weights is also based on individual preference. This is often just as much mental as it is physical. The effects on the musculature after doing Pilates are not the same as with heavy weight training, and I do not believe there needs to be the same downtime to allow muscle tissue to

loss, eating and drinking hot foods and liquids promote a sense of fullness, so there may be a slight psychological advantage to drinking hot fluids with respect to satiety. (And, of course, according to Ayurveda principles, one should drink only warm beverages, because cold kills our all-important digestive fire.) And Western science tells us that staying properly hydrated is helpful to keep the intestinal tract working and prevent fatigue, both of



recover. Pilates places relatively light loads on the musculature—therefore, lifting weights the day after practicing Pilates or vice versa should not have adverse effects. —R.I.

Q: I'm confused! I've heard that it's better to drink room-temperature water, but some people say cold is better. Both claim it's better for the body and helps with weight loss. Help!

A: Drinking water does help with weight management. However, there is no truth to the myth that the temperature of the water you drink makes any significant difference in weight loss. While there is a very slight thermal effect when you drink water that's colder than room temperature, the body can actually digest about 8 ounces of cold water every 20 minutes. And if you're drinking enough water, your urine will be nearly colorless and odorless.

As for drinking hot water for weight

which are important components to a healthy body.

Don't forget: It is easy to mistake hunger for thirst, because the body's thirst mechanism is not very sensitive. Unfortunately, when we see food, we often think, *Great, I must be hungry* and eat, even if we really aren't particularly hungry. But how often do you see a drinking fountain these days? And if you do happen to come across one, do you automatically think, *Wow, I must be thirsty?* Probably not. The thirst mechanism dulls with age, and many medications also affect our sense of thirst. You must train yourself to drink water consistently, and, just like anything else, the more you do it, the more comfortable you will feel with it. —J.K.

Q: Is it really a bad idea to eat after 8:00 p.m.? Why?

A: The magic hour after which all food is transformed into something bad for you—that's one of the biggest

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