

# The Benefits of Pilates for Ballet Dancers

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## **Abstract**

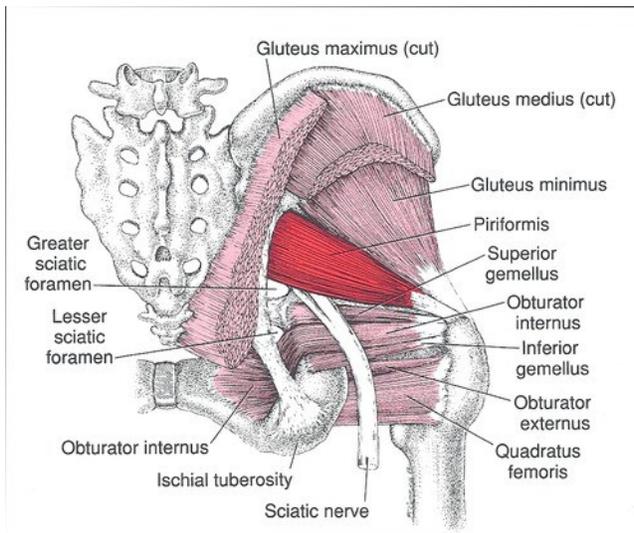
Ballet is a very intense art form that requires determination, focus and 100 percent effort from your entire body. Any lack of focus or laziness in your technique could cause damage in your joints by not being in perfect alignment. Because of this wear and tear many dancers experience shortened careers because their joints become damaged from years of abuse. By integrating Pilates into their daily routines, they can begin to strengthen muscles that are improperly trained to help increase the longevity of their careers. In this case study we will take a look at my career as a ballet dancer and how integrating the BASI block system has helped improve my dancing form and continue the passion that I have for ballet.

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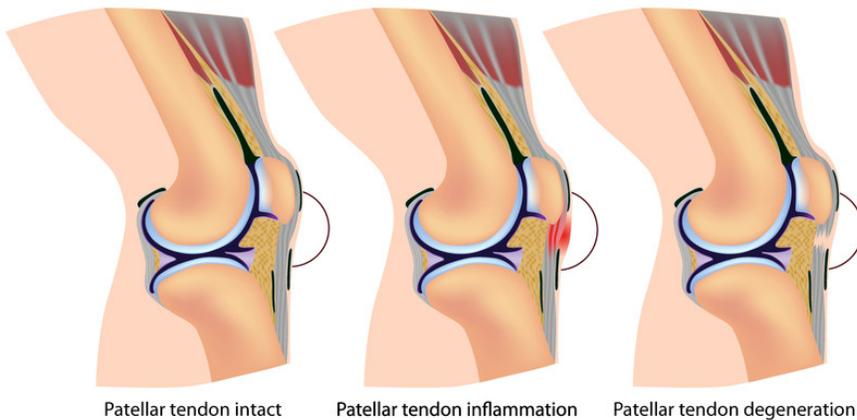
## Anatomy

Because of the continuous strain ballet dancers are putting on their hips they become over stretched and weak which can lead to inflammation of the tendons known as tendinitis which is very common in the world of ballet dancers.



According to the Mayo Clinic “Using proper technique is especially important when performing repetitive sports movements or job-related activities. Improper technique can overload the tendon — which can occur, for instance, with tennis elbow (or ballet) — and lead to tendinitis”

### Knee injury - Jumper's knee



## Case Study

For this case study we will focus on my past experience with dancing and the injuries I sustained, as well as the treatments used to help continue my career as a dancer. I am twenty one years old and have been dancing since I was four. It has been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember but over the years my passion came with some casualties. Recently I have been diagnosed with tendinitis in my hips and knees. Tendinitis is an injury in which the tendons become inflamed due to repetition of movement in a particular area, if left untreated causes pain in the afflicted area and could potentially lead to a rupture of the tendon itself. Before it was diagnosed I felt a stabbing in my hip and in my knee whenever I danced, I thought I just needed to stretch more but the longer I let it go unchecked the more pain I felt. The pain became so intense that straightening my knee to do the simplest of dance movements became a daunting task that only got harder and harder from then on. As time went on the tendinitis also began to affect my personal life because I would experience pain whenever I would walk, I would often take painkillers to help sooth the pain but eventually they had no effect on the inflammation. With my insurance not being able to cover many physical therapy sessions and painkillers no longer working I was on the verge of despair when my mother suggested I go with her to a Pilates class. Although taking the class was a bit difficult at first the instructor we had was extremely helpful and she was able to work with me and my affliction. After the class I spoke with her and she told me how, often times physical therapists will suggest going to Pilates for patients who finish their therapy sessions who still need more time to strengthen their injuries. It was then I knew that taking Pilates would be the best route to take to help, and with it came my desire to help others like me who are in need.

## **Conditioning Program Utilizing the Basi Block System**

### **Roll Down**

We start with the roll down to take a moment to feel where our body is and bring our focus to Pilates as well as examine the imbalances in our body's so we know what we need to focus on.

### **Warm Up (Mat)**

- Pelvic Curl
- Spine Twist Supine
- Chest Lift
- Chest Lift with Rotation

We warm up with these exercises because the muscle focus is the abdominals and strengthening the core is important in maintaining balance which prevents future injuries.

### **Footwork (Wunda Chair)**

- Parallel Heels
- Parallel Toes
- V-Position Toes
- Open V-Position Heels
- Open V-Position Toes
- Calf Raises
- Single Leg Heel
- Single Leg Toes

The footwork is helpful for strengthening the knee extensor. This is important because dancers can easily overstretch their knees if they let their arch drop forward. The wunda chair sits you up

right which forces the subject to focus on their spine alignment and core more so than they would laying on your back.

### **Abdominal Work (Wunda Chair)**

- Pike Sitting
- Standing Pike Reverse

These exercises help further strengthen and maintain control of the abdominal muscles.

### **Hip Work (Reformer)**

- Frog
- Circles Down
- Circles Up
- Openings

Hip work helps hip abductor strength and knee extensor control further strengthening those weak muscles that can lead to damage if they continue being danced on.

### **Spinal Articulation (Reformer)**

- Semi Circle

### **Stretch (Reformer)**

- Side Split

I chose this one specifically because it helps strengthen the iliopsoas which can become very weak when you're a ballet dancer

### **Full Body Integration (Reformer)**

- Scooter

### **Arm Work (Reformer)**

- Arm Sitting Series

- Chest Expansion
- Biceps
- Rhomboids
- Hug a Tree
- Salute

### **Leg Work (Reformer)**

- Skating Single Leg
- Hamstring Curl

### **Lateral Flexion and Rotation (Reformer)**

- Side Over on Box

### **Back Extension (Reformer)**

- Pulling Straps 1

### **Roll Down**

Most of these exercises focus on strengthening the knee extensors and hips as well as the core all of which are important strengthening weak muscles and prevention of injury.

## **Conclusion**

After years of studying ballet, my body ached and felt as though my joints were deteriorating and I would have to stop doing the thing I loved the most. After finding Pilates I was able to start strengthening my muscles in a way that helped support my joints and reduce the pain so I could continue dancing and keep my body in peak physical condition. By focusing on muscle groups around my knees and my hips I am able to maximize the amount of time I can spend dancing without feeling any discomfort. While I still experience pain if I work myself too hard, it is significantly less than the pain I experienced before Pilates. Now after studying the BASI block system I found the best possible way to help not only myself but those who are like me.

## **Bibliography**

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