8-Minute Workout: Pilates for a Longer, Leaner Look

**This express Pilates workout will help you tone your core and improve your posture.**

[Pilates](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/exercises/pilates.htm) does more than just tone and firm your core. By initiating all movements from your center, you'll improve your posture and look leaner in just a few workouts. To maximize results, keep your belly button drawn in and up, your neck and back long, and your [shoulders](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/shoulders.htm) relaxed. Do this routine daily to keep your body looking its best.



**Minutes 0:00-1:00: Swan**

**Targets: Back, Abdominals, Inner Thighs**

* Lie facedown on the floor, [legs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/legs.htm) together, palms on floor by shoulders, elbows at sides.
* Press hands into floor and inhale, lifting head, shoulders, and [chest](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/chest.htm).
* Arch [upper back](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/upper-back.htm) slightly, keeping [abs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/abs.htm) drawn in.
* Take 2 or 3 breaths.
* Slowly return head and chest to floor.
* Repeat.



**Double-Leg Stretch**

**Minutes 1:00-2:00**

Targets: [Abdominals](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/abs.htm), Inner [Thighs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/thighs.htm)

* Lie on back, hugging knees into [chest](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/chest.htm).
* Curl head, neck, and [shoulders](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/shoulders.htm) off floor.
* Extend arms overhead next to ears; simultaneously lift [legs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/legs.htm) 45 degrees.
* Hold for 1 count, then bend knees, circling arms out to sides to return hands to shins.
* Repeat, keeping upper body lifted and [inner thighs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/inner-thigh.htm) pressed together.



**Spine Stretch Forward**

**Minutes 2:00-4:00**

Targets: Back, [Abdominals](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/abs.htm)

* Sit with arms and [legs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/legs.htm) extended.
* Inhale and sit up tall; exhale and reach forward over legs.
* Curl head, neck, and [shoulders](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/shoulders.htm) forward, scooping navel toward spine. (Think of bending over a beach ball, not bending at the [waist](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/waist.htm).)
* Inhale; hold for 1 count.
* Exhale; deepen abdominal scoop.
* Inhale, rolling up to sit.
* Repeat.



**Seated Spine Twist**

**Minutes 4:00-6:00**

Targets: [Obliques](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/obliques.htm)

* Sit with [legs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/legs.htm) extended, feet flexed, arms extended at sides at [shoulder](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/shoulders.htm) level.
* Inhale and sit up tall, then exhale and draw your [abs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/abs.htm) in, twisting at the [waist](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/waist.htm) to the right.
* Rotate rib cage, arms, and head, keeping [hips](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/hips.htm) square.
* Inhale and return to face front.
* Repeat to the left, then continue to alternate sides.



**Leg Pull Front**

**Minutes 6:00-7:00**

Targets: [Abdominals](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/abs.htm), Back, [Quads](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/quads.htm)

* Sit with [legs](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/legs.htm) extended, hands on floor, fingers pointing toward body.
* Lift [hips](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/hips.htm) off floor to bring body into a straight line.
* Raise left leg as high as you can without shifting hips.
* Hold for 3 seconds, then slowly lower leg to floor.
* Alternate sides.

**Leg Pull Back**

**Minutes 7:00-8:00**

Targets: [Abdominals](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/abs.htm), [Glutes](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/glutes.htm), [Hamstrings](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/muscles/hamstrings.htm), [Chest](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/chest.htm) (not shown)

* Start out in a full [push-up](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/exercises/push-ups.htm) position with your abdominals engaged, hands in line with [shoulders](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/shoulders.htm).
* Lift left [leg](http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/videos/body-parts/legs.htm) 2 to 5 inches off the floor.
* Point toes and hold for 3 full seconds before slowly lowering your leg.
* Repeat with right leg; continue to alternate sides.