Pilates is everywhere these days. If you are managing scoliosis you might already have tried Pilates. Although Pilates will not be able to cure scoliosis or correct the curve, it may be able to help a person to obtain a more balanced posture and address muscle imbalance issues, which may be helpful in managing pain and consequently gaining fitness.

Physiotherapists often recommend some of the Pilates mat work exercises for practice at home. Maybe you go to a regular mat work class. Pilates mat work is very useful to help maintain your body but Pilates is much more than just mat work.

### Studio Pilates

Many people don’t realise that Joseph Pilates created amazing machines that use springs to create resistance and support the body. This form of Pilates is generally known as Studio Pilates and it offers a physical remedy to rebalance and reinvigorate your body. It’s not like the mindless repetition of a traditional weight training gym programme.

In Studio Pilates priority is given to where you are moving from, and whether the quality of the movement is helping to develop muscular response and systematically improve whole body function. With the machines we can use breath, movement, and spring resistance to stimulate change in the muscles and so rehabilitate the body.

Regular Studio Pilates sessions can help to greatly reduce imbalances, because the pressure from the springs encourages muscular response. When you don’t have to expend so much energy holding your body in a movement, you can become much more precise and so target specific areas that might need strengthening, lengthening, or shortening.

Ideally this improvement is best achieved working in a one-to-one session at which the teacher can focus on helping your specific needs. Private sessions are more expensive than being part of a group but are worth considering because of the benefits. A cost-effective alternative to weekly classes is to have a Studio Pilates lesson once or twice a month and practise an individual programme at home in between times. Regular Pilates is a process of refinement. You work at a level that is right for your body and over time the class becomes more challenging as you develop your potential.

### Finding a teacher

Finding the right teacher for you is a very personal choice. Teachers are individuals and will work differently. I know of a teacher who doesn’t touch people at all, but gives very clear verbal cues, which works for some people but would be very unhelpful for others. With Pilates it is crucial to work with the breath, so if a teacher doesn’t talk about breath they are probably not right for you. Be confident to ask potential teachers about their training - how long it was, and where it was completed. The Pilates Foundation website ([www.pilatesfoundation.com](http://www.pilatesfoundation.com)) is a good place to start looking for a teacher.  We are a not-for-profit organisation and were founded to try and support high-quality teachers and training.

If you can’t get to do some Pilates, try to avoid sitting for longer than 40 minutes at a time. We sit too much and we don’t walk enough, which encourages our bodies to compress, over-lengthen, and overall become tight and weak. If you are still growing and are managing scoliosis, that makes the situation even more tricky. When we sit still we fix our muscles but muscles like movement because it helps keep them fluid and strong.
The six principles of Pilates

Joseph Pilates based his work around six principles:

1. **Breath**
   Joseph Pilates believed it was vital to engage with the breath if you wanted to create balance in the body. We breathe about 26,000 times a day. If we breathe well it will help to keep us strong. When our breath is constricted it will tend to encourage stiffness and our body will try to compensate in ways that can cause ongoing problems. In Pilates we work through the breath because we have a raft of secondary breathing muscles that are also part of our core. If you breathe with precision and control it is possible to harness a range of muscles and develop them over time.

2. **Control**
   If a movement isn't controlled it will tend to be created by the muscles that already work hard and not by the ones that have become weak through postural imbalance. If you control the body’s movements you have a chance of helping the weaker structures become stronger.

3. **Centring**
   By focusing on working through your centre you can integrate the deepest structures and build your function from the inside out.

4. **Concentration**
   Any movement you make is more effective, both short- and long-term, if it is created in a mindful way.

5. **Precision**
   When we move with precision we give a clearer message to both the muscles and the nervous system. Because the nerves control the soft tissue in our bodies and the soft tissue controls the bones, the more precisely we work the more the message will get through.

6. **Flow**
   If our muscles work well together they have a subtle and intricate interplay that promotes integration and develops function throughout our bodies.