

# It's Time for a PILATES INTERVENTION

Your pelvis is rotating back on one side. Your hip bones seem uneven. You have one-sided pain in your back and pelvis. Any (or all) of these sound familiar? Restore proper alignment using this mat series, which relies on wedges to not only help break the pattern, but give you the tools to live a pain-free life.

By Sally Anderson  
Edited by Amanda Altman

I'm a posture nerd. There, I've said it! Figuring out and fixing postural dysfunctions and movement patterns is exciting for me. And yes, it's a constant work in progress for me (and everyone else), but that's part of the fun—putting all the pieces of the puzzle together and watching for progress.

For many years, I've been trying to solve postural puzzles and help others understand how to work with postural deviations. Over time, I've realized how common pelvic rotational patterns have become. When chronic, these

patterns can be debilitating, and for that reason, I had to find a strategic way to intervene, and help repattern and rebalance the pelvis, to bring about better movement potential and less pain for my clients.

Pelvic rotation can be a very challenging postural distortion to understand and unravel, but by integrating some simple tools and strategies drawn from allied health modalities into the Pilates environment, I found I was able to address chronic pelvic rotation patterns in an effective and user-friendly way.

My key to breaking the rotational pattern and introducing better balance and optimal function is by utilizing wedges as Pilates props. The wedges help to break the pattern, allowing the body to release and activate in a more balanced position, which ultimately helps to relieve symptoms while retraining the body's more ideal recruitment patterns.

I prefer to integrate these strategies into a regular Pilates programming structure so that I can improve a client's posture while still taking them through a holistic

Pilates practice. This allows the client to understand their whole body in movement and how it relates to better alignment and function, and gives them tools to help themselves. Using wedges, I teach clients to understand their own setup so they can take home an easy-to-do regimen for relieving their own discomfort and retraining their body to reboot its postural patterning.

I call this overall process a "Pilates intervention." Bearing in mind, people with minor pelvic rotations benefit simply through our standard Pilates repertoire. However, when there are clients whose symptoms, or obvious signs, dictate a more specific need to intervene, then I have found success using wedges and programming strategies. This intervention process

is specific to retraining the mind and body while restoring function, and should be individually targeted to the client's needs.

The exercises here are based around three considerations:

1. Unload the sacrum and bring the pelvis as close to neutral as possible.
2. Add stabilization and activation to the neutralized position, progressively increasing load and challenge.
3. Select exercises that derotate the pattern and restore proper alignment.

Bear in mind that the pelvic rotation may not go away altogether—often the structural influences and lifestyle

activities of the person may not allow for complete redress—but this intervention should provide relief from symptoms, a more functional control of the rotation, a conscious understanding of how the client can manage their own needs, and the ability to progress Pilates work with better form and function.

The exercise selections in the Pilates method are endlessly useful in application to this type of rotation. Think of selecting repertoire that applies to the muscular imbalances and structural deviances at hand. If you're a teacher, I think you'll find it fun and rewarding to cherry-pick the exercises that best suit each client and allow them to lead the best life possible. If you're a client, well, you'll find it positively life-changing. **PS**

## WEDGING TO NEUTRAL

**PROPS:** 2 wedges

**PURPOSE:** helps bring a rotated pelvis to as neutral a position as possible, unload the torsion from the rotation and "imprint" the rebalanced position to memory

### SUPINE

**SETUP:** Lie on your back with your legs extended and together. Insert one wedge under the top of your pelvis, slightly angling it down toward your sacrum. If you have a right-back rotation of your pelvis, place the second wedge under your left upper thigh as shown; for a left-back rotation, it goes under your right upper thigh.

1. Allow your pelvis and entire body to release into this wedged position.
2. Take 6–10 full breaths, relax your body and find the adapted position.
3. Take 6–10 more breaths; as you exhale, engage your muscles around the wedges to "imprint" this activation in the new position into your mind.

### PRONE

**SETUP:** Lie facedown with your legs extended and together. Insert one wedge under your left hip bone (or right, depending on your rotation), slightly angling it down toward your pubic bone. Place the second wedge under your right (or left) upper thigh.

1. Repeat steps 1–3 of the supine version.

**TIPS:** If you don't have wedges, use your sneakers instead! Note that, if you flip straight over from supine to prone on the wedges, you'll have the wedges in place for the prone setup, making for a pretty seamless transition. In supine, for a left-back rotation, you'll be encouraging the right side of your pelvis forward and the left back; it's the opposite in the prone version.



SUPINE



SUPINE



PRONE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN COX; HAIR BY SARA COLLEY AND MAKEUP BY JESSICA CHYNOWETH; CLOTHES BY STUDIO STYLE ACTIVE

## SUPINE ARM SERIES WITH WEDGES

**PROPS:** 2 wedges; set of 2-pound weights

**PURPOSE:** adds load to the rebalanced position to promote stabilization and activation of the torso and pelvic musculature, to rebalance the entire body

**SETUP:** Same as Wedging to Neutral Supine, but reach your arms toward the ceiling, holding the weights in your hands, palms in. Allow your shoulders to drop, engaging the back of your shoulder joints.

**1.** Inhale, opening your arms to your sides as far as you can while maintaining torso stability; exhale, returning to the starting position. Do 6–10 reps.

**2.** Inhale, scissoring your arms forward and back; exhale, returning to the starting position. Do 6–10 reps.

**TIPS:** Allow the weight of your pelvis to rest heavily on the wedges. Maintain your rib-to-pelvis connection.

**VARIATION:** Do this on the Cadillac, using the Arm Springs instead of the weights.



This intervention process is specific to retraining the mind and body while restoring function, and should be individually targeted to the client's needs.

## BASIC BACK EXTENSION WITH WEDGES

**PROPS:** 2 wedges; set of 2-pound weights

**PURPOSE:** same as Supine Arm Series with Wedges

**SETUP:** Same as Wedging to Neutral Prone, but reach your arms by your sides, holding the weights in your hands with

your palms up. Rest your forehead on the floor.

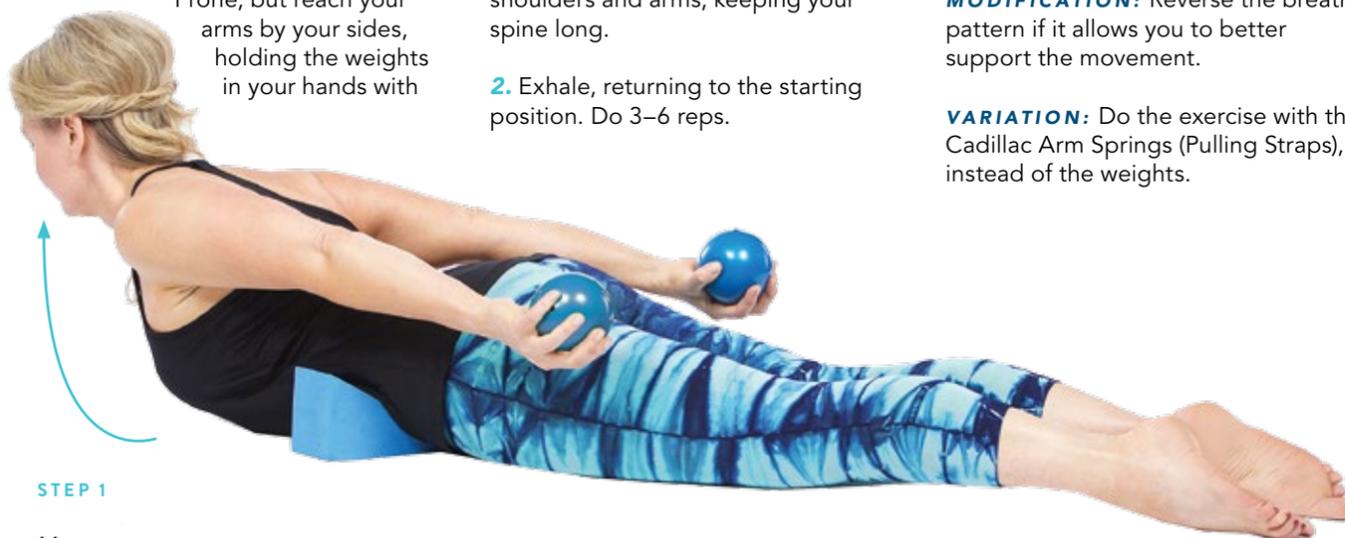
**1.** Exhale, engaging your abdominals; inhale, lifting your head, neck, shoulders and arms, keeping your spine long.

**2.** Exhale, returning to the starting position. Do 3–6 reps.

**TIP:** Focus on supporting your lumbar spine (lower back)—don't let it hinge—and lifting your head, neck and shoulders.

**MODIFICATION:** Reverse the breath pattern if it allows you to better support the movement.

**VARIATION:** Do the exercise with the Cadillac Arm Springs (Pulling Straps), instead of the weights.



## CIRCLE SQUEEZE WITH CHEST LIFT AND HULA

**PROPS:** wedge; Magic Circle

**PURPOSE:** activates the anterior oblique sling while promoting pelvic derotation  
**SETUP:** Lie on your back, with your knees bent hip-width apart and the Circle between your inner thighs. For a right-back rotation, place the wedge under your right-side pelvis and your hands behind your head. It's the opposite for a left-back rotation, as shown.

**1.** Exhale, lifting your head, neck and shoulder blades as you squeeze the Circle; inhale, returning to the starting position. Do 3–6 reps.

**2.** Exhale, lifting your upper body and bringing your left armpit toward your right thigh as you squeeze the Circle; inhale, returning to the starting position. Repeat on your opposite side. Do 3–6 reps, alternating sides.

**TIPS:** It's important to avoid tucking your pelvis during the squeeze. Avoid using your hip flexors—keep your sacrum flat.

**MODIFICATIONS:** Reach your arms by your sides during the lift in step 1, but make sure your neck isn't feeling strained. Decrease your range of motion.



## GEAR GUIDE

**Sally's own wedges** (she made them out of dense foam), but try Original Norsk Mobilization Wedge (\$31.95; [www.optp.com](http://www.optp.com)), or as Sally suggests, use your sneakers!

**Balanced Body Ultra-Fit Circle®** (\$34; [www.pilates.com](http://www.pilates.com))

**Merrithew™ Toning Balls** (\$13.99; [www.merrithew.com](http://www.merrithew.com))

## CIRCLE HAMSTRING SQUEEZE

**PROPS:** wedge; Magic Circle

**PURPOSE:** works on lumbo-pelvic (lower back-to-pelvis) stabilization, hip extensor strength and pelvic derotation

**SETUP:** Lie facedown, with the wedge under one side of your pelvis and the Circle between your corresponding heel and glute.

1. Exhale, squeezing your heel toward your glute. Do 3–6 reps.

2. Lift your head and shoulders slightly, and then your knee. Exhale, squeezing your heel toward your glute. Do 5–10 reps.

3. Repeat the entire sequence on your other side.

**TIPS:** I suggest working your right leg first and finishing with your left, as the left hip extensors are commonly less active in this pattern. Support your lumbar spine by maintaining abdominal engagement throughout.

**MODIFICATION:** Decrease the reps.



## WALL LEG LIFTS

**PROPS:** 2 wedges; wall

**PURPOSE:** creates a closed chain down the non-working leg; focuses on hinging the hip joint and postural activation

**SETUP:** Lie on your back, with your legs together and extended, feet against a wall. Insert the wedges as you did in Wedging to Neutral.

1. Exhale, floating your left leg to tabletop, finding the “hinge” in your hip joint while maintaining your neutral pelvis and working the body actively in opposition.

2. Inhale, returning your foot to the wall. Repeat on your other side. Do 6–10 reps, slowly alternating legs.

**TIPS:** Teach your body to maintain and create length in the spine. Imagine that you’re doing the exercise in a standing position, where your extensors are just as active as your flexors.

**MODIFICATION:** Do all of the reps on one side before repeating on your other side.



## THE HUNDRED MODIFIED

**PROP:** wedge

**PURPOSE:** works on total-body strengthening, control and breathing in a rebalanced postural position

**SETUP:** Lie on your back, with the wedge under your right-side pelvis for a left-back rotation (or the opposite for a right-back rotation, as shown), knees bent, feet flat and arms by your sides.

1. Lift your head, neck and shoulders, and vigorously “pump” your arms as you inhale for 5 counts, then exhale for another 5, for a total of 100 counts.

**TIP:** Insert the wedge just enough to give some balance to the pelvis and surrounding structures—don’t overdo it.

**MODIFICATION:** Decrease the number of breaths.

**ADVANCED:** Take the weight out of your legs, and place just the tips of your toes on the floor. Progress to tabletop, then to fully extended legs as your positioning and control improve.

**VARIATION:** Get into the Wedging to Neutral setup position, then lift your torso and do the Hundred.



**SALLY ANDERSON**, PMA-CPT, is the founder and director of PilatesInt Studios across Sydney and Melbourne, and PilatesITC national training center in Australia. Originally trained by Rael Isacowitz in the late '80s, Anderson delivered BASI training extensively before founding PilatesITC and spearheading the accreditation of the first Australian government-registered Pilates-specific qualifications in 2004; the articulation of these qualifications to bachelor's degrees became a reality in June 2013. Anderson holds two advanced diplomas—one in Pilates and another in management—as well as certificate IV in training and assessment; she's in the process of completing her advanced diploma in nutritional medicine. Anderson was the founding president elect of the Pilates Alliance Australasia, and the founding co-director of the Australian national industry conference. She is a self-professed posture and Pilates nerd. For more information, visit [www.pilatesitc.edu.au](http://www.pilatesitc.edu.au).

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