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- Is Pilates for Cyclists? -



INTRODUCTION

Yesterday morning I rode about 35 miles. I woke up this morning and rolled out of bed with all the grace and agility of an unfolding rusty lawn chair. The shape of my spine seemed to be imitating the letter "S." My brain commanded my legs to move, but my legs (like my Terrier dog), ignored me.

Now, I've never been one to just sit down and hope that the pain just goes away. So I started looking for some alternatives to my regular fitness routine. Well, I found this and am going to give it a try. Join me?

The Best Wall Pilates Moves to Power Your Ride

IF YOU HAVE A WALL, YOU'VE GOT ALL YOU NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE MUSCLES THAT SUPPORT YOUR CYCLING ROUTINE.

BY LAUREL LEIGHT/BICYCLING.COM

You spend enough time and money on your cycling routine—wouldn't it be great if the [strength training](#) you do to support it could be inexpensive and super quick to do? Turns out, the workout that's all over TikTok is about [strengthening](#) and [stretching](#) the [muscles](#) that help make you a better cyclist. And it requires zero equipment or money to do at home.

Enter: wall Pilates. "This variation of [Pilates](#) is definitely hot, and the trend has even caught some instructors off-guard, but it's not new," says Beth Sandlin, founder of [Trifecta Pilates](#) in Denver, who's been teaching wall Pilates for several years. She's noticed a huge uptick in popularity of her wall-based [YouTube sessions](#) lately. "You can do the same exercises as you would on a mat or reformer, but simply adding a wall to the mix without needing any other gear, elevates it. You get a different sense with the wall—it's so stable, and it supports your body while getting you in the right position for deeper activation."

Read on for the benefits of wall Pilates, how it can [power](#) up your time on the bike, and what to know before you give it a go. Plus, follow the four moves to try it at home.

What is wall Pilates?

Wall Pilates is exactly what it sounds like: a variation on [Pilates](#)—the low-impact strengthening and stretching workout designed by Joseph Pilates for rehabilitation—that incorporates a wall. "Using the wall for leverage during certain moves adds a new dimension and increases the resistance of intricate moves that are safe on your [joints](#) and work your whole body," says Adefemi Betiku, D.P.T., C.S.C.S., a physical therapist and instructor at [Club Pilates](#) in New Jersey. The increased resistance with a wall, he says, is similar to what you'd experience using a springboard in a Pilates class.

When you add the wall, you can generate forces that will make certain exercises harder. Take the classic Pilates exercise the hundred, for example. If you do that motion (where you lie in a crunch position with leg extended and pump your arms down by your hips) with your [legs](#) against the wall, that adds a whole different dimension into that [workout](#), says Betiku. Rather than being mostly focused on your [abs](#), suddenly the move also fires up your [hamstrings and glutes](#).

That extra activation packs a powerful strengthening punch for cyclists. "When you place your feet against the wall, there's a greater connection that automatically engages the legs and the [core](#) at once—and for cyclists in particular, that connection plays a big part in powering your ride," adds Sandlin.

Plus, adding on a short wall Pilates routine after some of your daily rides is a great, efficient way to work in effective [resistance training](#) without the need to trek to the gym—or even have any [weights](#) on hand. That makes it a lot easier to add it onto your routine on a regular basis.

What do you need to know before you try wall Pilates?

For the most part, the [trending workout](#) is easy on your joints and safe to try on your own. “You’re more likely to get injured on your bike than by doing Pilates,” says Sandlin.

That being said, it’s important to pay close attention to how each move feels and dial it back if necessary. Using the wall for support can make it easier to increase your range of motion during certain [exercises](#)—and that can potentially increase your risk of pushing a little too far and getting hurt.

While doing [bridges](#) with your feet on the floor, for example, you’ll most likely lift your [hips](#) up only until your shoulder blades are left on the floor, says Betiku—but doing the move with your feet on the wall, you could feasibly raise your body until your shoulder blades are lifted and that puts weight on the base of your neck, which you want to avoid.

“If you feel any [pain](#), you have to ask yourself what you’re doing wrong,” warns Betiku. “Be aware of what each move is targeting and listen to your body.”

Because Pilates has such a [strong core](#) and [breathing](#) element, it’s also important to pay attention to your core muscles working and that you’re taking efficient inhales and exhales as you perform each exercise. That’s how you’ll gain the most benefits.

Four Wall Pilates Moves to Add to Your Routine

Here are four moves to get you started with wall Pilates, each meant to [strengthen your core](#) and [lower body](#) to supercharge your time in the saddle. Try them on days off from cycling or do them after a ride.

1. Pelvic Curl



Why it works: This move is also known as a hip [bridge](#), but Sandlin prefers to call it a pelvic curl to emphasize the range of motion and articulation of your spine as you move. With it, you'll fire up your glutes big time, as well as hamstrings, which power your [pedal stroke](#). The addition of the yoga block also fires up the adductors (or [inner thighs](#)) and [pelvic floor](#) muscles to help with stability and better [knee](#) alignment as you bike.

How to do it: Lie faceup with knees bent and feet flat against a wall. Place a yoga block or ball between thighs and press into it to help keep legs parallel as you work through the move. Exhale and slowly lift hips up, trying to move vertebra by vertebra and lifting until only shoulders are pressing into the floor. Inhale and lower to start. Repeat. Do 10-12 reps.

2. The Hundred



Why it works: A traditional move in any Pilates class, the Hundred against a wall targets not only your core but also your [legs](#). The [spinal stability](#) you gain with this exercise pays off in [efficiency](#) on your rides, too.

How to do it: Lie faceup with feet flat against a wall, legs straight and about 45 degrees off the floor. Engage core and roll head, neck, and shoulders up off the floor. Keeping arms straight, hover them a few inches off floor and pump them up and down quickly. Inhale for 5 arm pumps, then exhale for 5 arm pumps. Repeat for 10 rounds.

3. Standing Lunge

Why it works: By anchoring one heel against the wall, your weight is more evenly distributed between both [legs](#) and you can focus on keeping your pelvis squared forward, which is the form you want to maintain on the bike, notes Sandlin.

How to do it: Face away from a wall. Place left heel firmly against the base of the wall and take a big step forward with right foot. This is your starting position. Slowly lower until right thigh is

parallel to floor, back left knee hovering just off the floor. Then drive through feet to stand back up, returning to starting position. Repeat. Do 6-12 reps. Then switch sides.

4. Spinal Extension



Why it works: Targeting your [upper back](#), this strength move counteracts all the time you spend bent over your handlebars. But unlike many [back-extension exercises](#), keeping the soles of your feet against the wall fires up your legs at the same time.

How to do it: Lie facedown on the floor with feet flat against the base of the wall. Inhale, engage legs, and lift head and shoulders (don't lift from the lower back). Reach arms toward feet as you lift. Lower on an exhale. Repeat for 3 reps. Then repeat for 3 reps with arms stretched out to a T at sides. Finally, repeat for 3 reps with arms stretching overhead.

OK riders, I hope that is useful insight for you. Don't forget to wipe your footprints off the wall, and then, get out there, and pedal! Don't forget.....

Make every ride epic,

Darryl