Pilates for obese patients: Does it promote weight loss and overall well-being?

Nur 'Aqilah Syafiqah Mohd Ruzi[1], Nurul Hayati Chamhuri[2]

[1]Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, [2]Family Medicine Unit, Primary Health Care Department, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Pilates, an increasingly popular exercise, is a low-impact, core-based physical activity that emphasises strength, flexibility, breathing control, and body awareness. This study aims to provide an overview of the benefits of Pilates in promoting weight loss and overall well-being among obese individuals. **Materials and Methods:** A literature review was done from four databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Scopus. The keywords used were "Pilates AND obesity," "Pilates AND weight loss," "Pilates AND cardiovascular endurance," "Pilates AND psychological benefits," "Pilates AND core strength," "Pilates vs aerobic exercise," and "Pilates AND long-term weight management." A total of 20 articles were chosen between January 2009 and January 2023 which focus on overweight or obese adults with BMI ≥ 27.5. **Results:** A few themes emerged from the literature review: (1) the health benefits of Pilates, (2) how effective it is for weight loss, and (3) safety precautions for the exercise. Studies have shown that regular Pilates exercise, performed two to three times a week for 45 to 60 minutes per session, has been proven to enhance core muscle tone, reduce body fat and improve flexibility. The reduction in body weight or body fat depends on the frequency and duration of the Pilates exercise performed. This aligns with many obesity recommendations, which suggest a minimum of 300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week for an individual to achieve significant weight loss benefits. In addition, Pilates emphasises controlled breathing and mindful movement, contributing to reduced stress and improved self-confidence, which is an important factor for sustainable weight loss. **Conclusion:** Pilates is beneficial for obese individuals as it increases flexibility, muscle strength, and stress regulation. It is also effective in weight loss and body fat reduction, and, due to its low-impact nature, it has been proven to be sustainable in a weight loss journey. It is also a safe exercise, with few safety precautions to consider, such as for individuals with spine injuries, pregnancy, and osteoporosis.

Keywords: Pilates, pilates exercise, obesity