

CHAIR PILATES' RESISTANCE EXERCISE IS A...

WUNDA-FUL WORKOUT

By Kate Martin

Looking for more of a challenge in your Pilates practice? Then pull up a chair at The Hundred Pilates Studio, just don't expect to get comfortable.

Made for anything but lounging, their chairs (called a Wunda chair) offer a variety of Pilates workouts for full body strength and toning.

Lightweight and compact, it stays true to Joseph Pilates' dream of making Pilates accessible to all in the comfort of their own home. Like the Reformer, the chair is a challenging resistance exercise machine and forms part of a strengthening class which will positively affect the shoulder girdle, the ribs and the hips. It's just much less complicated in design.

"The chair is very effective for creating sport-specific programmes for skiers, runners, bikers, soccer players and basketball players, as it develops explosive leg power integrated with core strength and good biomechanics," The Hundred Founder Asma Hila Loath tells me. "Olympic Gold Medal swimmer Natalie Coughlin uses the chair in her routine," she said.

What looks like a padded stool you could rest your feet on in front of the television, is really a miracle worker for stability and flexibility work, and is fitted with a large pedal bar on one side that can be pressed down against the resistance of springs.

Exercises include a lot of leg and arm resistance work on this pedal and in my private session with impressively knowledgeable instructor Elena Goncalves, I worked just about every muscle group lying, sitting, and standing on the chair, as well as from posi-



Keep up: Almost every part of the body is utilised during the exercise.

tions to the sides of the chair.

I huffed through standing lunges (with one leg on the seat, the other pumping away on the pedal below - and don't forget to keep a stick-straight posture!).

I was asked to sit on the seat with arms outstretched in front of me

and pump both feet up and down on the pedals for a good leg and abdominal burn. Then turn around and do the same, but with legs outstretched, core tight and arms extended back to work the pedal.

Elena even had me standing on the pedal with both feet, hands on

the seat while drawing the belly towards the spine, inhaling and raising the hips until I was in pike position - much harder than it sounds, trying to breath in deep enough to raise that pedal against your weight.

There's so much you can do on this thing, you'll never get bored.

"And we will keep adding more advanced stuff to keep challenging you and also to increase your strength," assures Asma.

It's also great for rehabilitation from injury, particularly hip and knee replacement, "and for dancers healing from an injury and athletes of all kinds who want to improve their performance," adds Asma.

It's a great living room addition indeed but one would certainly need to be introduced to it by a certified instructor first, such as Elena - she seems to know more about your body than you do and could practically feel the tension in my straining heels as they tried to push against the weight and springs of the pedals, and was able to quickly correct my stance before any damage was done.

The verdict: That was extremely challenging, but also quite enlightening. I think in just that one hour, I learnt more about my body's posture, stamina and the various weaknesses and strengths I was carrying around in each limb and muscle group than I ever have in a fitness class.

What: Pilates Chair

Where: The Hundred Pilates Studio, Dubai Healthcare City

Price: Private classes are Dh290;

in classes of maximum six people, you only pay Dh90

Contact: www.thehundred.ae

or call 04 429 8433



Super machine: The Wunda Chair tests your strength and stamina thoroughly.