

Madman Drummer's Bummer

How the legendary E Street Band percussionist uses Pilates to beat back pain

A few years ago, Max Weinberg was struck with excruciating lower-back pain hours before he was about to go onstage with Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band. "I was literally knocked off my feet with muscle spasms," says the 55-year-old. Injections of a muscle relaxant provided temporary relief—the pain came from two herniated disks the drummer suffered years ago in a car accident—but long hours sitting on the set of NBC's *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* only worsened his condition. Surgery proved unsuccessful, and his doctor recommended Pilates. Spending long periods of time behind a drum set (or a desk) compresses your spine, and Pilates is a strengthening and stretching workout that focuses on the core muscles—abs, lats, traps—that take the strain off the back. After 10 months of two hourlong workouts a week at True Pilates New York, Weinberg can finally sit

comfortably and has noticed abdominal, back, and leg muscles he didn't know he had. Here are three exercises that returned the snap to Weinberg's sticks.

THE HUNDRED Lie faceup on a mat, chin to your chest and arms (palms down) by your sides. Bend your knees to your chest, then extend your legs at a 45-degree angle. Lift your arms 4 inches off the mat and pump them up and down without raising them higher than 4 inches, while inhaling for 5 seconds and then exhaling for 5 seconds. Continue until you complete 100 arm pumps.

THE ROLLDOWN Sit on the floor with your knees bent toward your chest and your hands holding the backs of your thighs. Flex your abdominal muscles and use them to slowly roll your back down until your arms are straight. Now pull yourself back up with your abdominal muscles. Repeat 5 times. This exercise should be



BACK STORY Long hours behind the drums on the set of *Conan O'Brien* worsened Weinberg's injured spine.

executed so slowly that you don't use gravity and momentum (as in the situp) to ease the muscle strain on your abs.

THE SPINE STRETCH Sit on the floor with your legs spread slightly wider than your hips and your knees slightly bent. Extend your hands in front, parallel to your legs.

Inhale and sit as erect as possible, stretching your spine toward the ceiling. Drop your chin to your chest and exhale while slowly rounding your spine forward. Reach as far as you can. Pause and inhale deeply before reversing the stretch to an upright position. Repeat 6 to 8 times. AMY LEVIN-EPSTEIN

desk jockey

Prevent "office back" and stay energized with these three Pilates-type exercises



Lift-Off

Sit tall in your chair with your lower back flat against your backrest, shoulders square, feet flat on the floor, and knees together. Inhale through your nose and scoop your stomach muscles inward and up for a count of 5. Release. Do 3 to 5 reps.



Leg Lifts

Sit with your back straight and your knees together. Using your gluteus maximus, lift and straighten your leg, keeping your stomach scooped. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat on both sides 3 to 5 times. This works your core muscles.



Neck Stretch

Sit up straight and turn your head to the right as far as you can. Hold. Keep your chin parallel to the floor. Now turn to the left and hold. Repeat 4 times. This will eliminate tension at the base of your neck before it can travel down your back.