

Serving the local community since 2001

Back in Shape



Physiotherapy & Pilates



Helen's Mat Classes

Term dates: 2022 Term 2

Start: Wednesday 27 April 2022

End: Friday 24 June 2022

There will be no casual attendance in order to regulate class sizes. However, all participants will have access to the Zoom recordings on my website, plus all previous term's recordings.

Alphington Bowls Club

Parkview Rd, Alphington

All ages and abilities classes

Mon: 12-1pm & 7-8pm

Wed: 5.30-6.30pm (Zoom only)

Thu: 8.00-9.00am (New class)

Fri: 9.15-10.15am &
10.30-11.30am

Cost: Mon: 7-week term: \$175

Wed: 9-week term: \$225

Thu: 9-week term: \$225

Fri: 9-week term: \$225

St. Andrews Uniting Church

85 Gillies Street, Fairfield

(Classes available Live and on Zoom)

Over 50s class

Mon: 9.30-10.20am

Cost: 7-week term: \$105

Limited mobility class

Mon: 10.30-11.20am

Cost: 7-week term: \$105

Fitness for the over 50s

I am often asked what type of exercise I would recommend for the over 50s. My answer is simple: the best exercise is that which gets done! If you enjoy a particular form of exercise, you are more likely to do it regularly as you won't see it as a chore. The bottom line is that any exercise is better than no exercise!

While it is important to stay strong and fit at any age, this becomes more crucial once you reach the age of 50 as your body is less forgiving than in your younger years. As we age, we become more prone to injury which presents an additional obstacle to maintaining strength and fitness. Habits you get into in your 50s could well decide whether your twilight years are enjoyable or miserable.

There are three types of exercise that are important for the over 50s: resistance training, cardio and balance.

Resistance training is arguably the most important as this is what will keep your muscles strong. It also beneficial in maintaining—or indeed improving—your bone density, which will help prevent common age-related injuries such as broken hips. In short, resistance training will help you continue to do all the activities you enjoy in your life.

Resistance training can be done with weights (e.g. bicep curls) resistance bands (see picture below) or just your own body weight (e.g. squats). Everyone is able to do something; you just need to find the right starting point for your ability and progress from there. Resistance training can seem a little intimidating for the uninitiated. If you have no idea how best to start, I'd suggest talking to your physio, finding a personal trainer or asking for help at a local gym.

With resistance training it is important to feel as though you are challenging yourself. You don't want to feel pain, but you do want the sensation of hard work. As you get into a routine, the exercises you have picked will begin to feel easier, and this is the time to progress, either in terms of the weight used, the number of repetitions, or the number of sets for each exercise.

Ideally, we should be achieving two resistance training sessions a week, in which we work as many of our large muscles as possible. I'd recommend finding different exercises to target our key muscle groups: thighs, buttocks, calves, stomach, chest, upper back, triceps and biceps. This will give you eight

exercises in total. For each, perform enough reps (say 5 to 10) so that you feel the muscles start to fatigue. Start with a single set and then build to two or three sets as you get stronger. When you reach this level, you can increase the resistance (e.g. the weight you are using) in order to reduce the number of reps and sets.

Cardio keeps our hearts strong. Like any other muscle, the heart needs to be worked.



We know when we are working our heart when we get a bit out of breath. There are many cardio choices: walking, running, cycle, rowing, skipping, boxing, dancing or swimming. It is good to pick an exercise that you enjoy, but also advantageous to have some variety so you don't get bored and so that you are working your body in different ways. Traditionally, it was believed that you needed to do the chosen exercise for 20 minutes non-stop for it to be beneficial, but the latest research shows that quick bursts of cardio activity can be as beneficial. An example is High Intensity Training (HIT), in which you exercise as hard and fast as you can for a short period—say 30 seconds—and repeat every five minutes over a 20-minute period. Cardio should ideally be performed three times a week.

The final form of exercise—balance training—will help prevent you from injury through tripping or falling. It helps to improve our awareness of where our body is in space and what position our joints are in. This is called proprioception. Our feet and ankles are especially important as the ligaments around these joints give our brain the information it needs. It is important to keep these joints flexible as stiff joints provide less feedback. In general, we improve balance by doing things that challenge it. This shouldn't be so challenging that we fall over, but equally not too easy that the exercise has no effect. We should aim to challenge our balance every day for at least five minutes.

In my Pilates classes, we do exercises that tick all three boxes: resistance, cardio and balance. However, one Pilates class a week is not enough. This needs to be supplemented with additional resistance, cardio and balance work as suggested above. Get the balance right, and you'll be fit and active enough to enjoy your 50s and beyond.

Active Standing Exercises

Unlike most 'Active Standing Exercises', this one is best performed while at home and undistracted, unless you like being the centre of attention!

Yoga tree pose

We covered this during Term 1 and it is a good one to keep working on, and a great exercise to perform at the start of each day to wake up your body's balance reactions. Two-to-three minutes on each side will count as your daily balance exercise.



- Stand with your feet hip-distance apart, thinking tall through the crown and focusing on a distant point at eye level.
- Place your palms together in front of your chest. Imagine a pole on your left and right sides and aim not to let your hips touch them.
- Take a breath in to prepare. As you breathe out, lift your pelvic floor muscles, draw in your belly and lift one foot. If necessary, keep your big toe on the ground as you find your balance.
- Keep breathing.
- If this is enough of a challenge, stay here. If you find it easy, place the sole of your raised foot against the standing leg and gently press the two together. Move your foot higher up if you want to increase the challenge.
- For a further challenge still, breathe in, straighten your arms in front of you parallel to the ground while keeping your palms together, and float your arms above your head as you breathe out.
- Breathe in to float your arms down again and bring them back to your chest on the breath out.
- Repeat, and after two-three minutes swap to the other side.
- For a further challenge, you can keep your arms overhead for longer, or hold your arms in any position on the way down.

Tuesdays & Thursdays

New treatment and class times

As many of you might know, for the last 26 years I have worked two days week as a physio at Simpson Barracks. I have recently decided to give this up in order to build my private physio business and increase the number of Pilates classes.

This will open up Tuesdays and Thursdays for me to see additional patients, as well as enabling me to create new Pilates classes on those days.

I am contemplating a 45-minute class on Tuesday or Thursday at 7am for those who like to warm up their body at the start of the day. This could be live or on Zoom.

My over-50s class is currently full so I'm considering starting another one. As we often lose a class on Mondays due to public holidays, a new class on Tuesday or Thursday might offer more continuity.

Another change is that this is the last year I will have a school-aged child to plan around, so from 2023 onwards I will not need school holidays off as I currently do. I'm considering taking a couple of longer breaks that do not correspond with school holidays, such as Feb/Mar, May/Jun or Aug/Sept.

I would welcome feedback on what your ideal yearly class timetable would be, and your suggestions for the kinds of classes/times you would like to see me add.

I'll keep you posted with the changes as they become more concrete.

