

Serving the local community since 2001

# Back in Shape



## Physiotherapy & Pilates



### Helen's Pilates

**Term dates: 2016 Term 2**

**Start: Monday 11 April**

**End: Friday 24 June**

### All ages and abilities

**Alphington Bowls Club  
Parkview Rd, Alphington**

**Mon: 12-1pm**

**Wed: 5.30-6.30pm & 6.30-7.30pm**

**Fri: 9.15-10.15am & 10.30-11.30am**

### Cost:

**Mon: (9-week term): \$180**

**Wed & Fri: (11-week term): \$220**

**OR \$25/class casual**

### Over 50s

**Fairfield Community Room  
Station St, Fairfield**

**Mon: 9.30-10.15am**

### Cost:

**Mon: (9-wk term): \$72**

**OR \$10/class casual**

### Limited mobility

**Fairfield Community Room  
Station St, Fairfield**

**Mon: 10.30-11.15am**

### Cost:

**Mon: (9-wk term): \$72**

**OR \$10/class casual**

**PUBLIC HOLIDAY ALERT: No  
classes on Anzac Day - Monday 25 April, or  
Queen's Birthday - Monday 13 June**

### Physio & Pilates Appointments

**Helen Constantinou  
47 Bennett St, Alphington  
T: 0421 526433**

### Steve's back: and this time the treatment is personal

I am a great advocate that Pilates and physiotherapy are complementary treatments and I want to tell you about a patient of mine—we'll call him Steve—to illustrate my point.

Steve first damaged his back in 1991 when he fractured his L5 lumbar vertebra whilst working as a tunnel-face engineer. Then in 2002, during a tour of duty in Afghanistan with the army, he suffered a bulging disc at the L4/L5 level of his spine. I first saw him as a patient in 2007, by which time he was suffering recurrent episodes of acute symptoms, interspersed with longer periods of lower-level chronic discomfort.

As a physio, I routinely helped 'milk' the bulging disc back into its natural position, and treated both the secondary stiffness in the facet joints either side of the spine and the ensuing muscle spasms across Steve's lumbar region.

I recommended a set of self-help stretches to alleviate discomfort and mitigate future symptoms, and also advised Steve to join one of my Pilates classes. Pilates offered Steve a great way to safely maintain his fitness and flexibility without exacerbating the condition, especially as I tailored the standard exercises to meet his precise needs. Pilates also presented an ideal forum to assess his ongoing requirements for further physio treatments.

While Steve's condition worsened over time, the combination of physiotherapy and Pilates slowed the rate of deterioration and delivered much-needed relief from pain and discomfort. In effect, this non-invasive approach gave Steve the breathing space he needed to defer surgery for as long as possible and time to explore all other available treatment options—surgical and non-surgical—including a series of epidural injections into the L4/L5 region.

Steve underwent spinal surgery in October 2014. On the lead up to the operation, he persisted with Pilates and I continued to give him physio treatments. As a result, Steve was able to maintain his fitness and present himself as the best possible surgical candidate. This also gave him a head-start with his post-operative rehab.

Steve's operation entailed a decompression/fusion procedure on the L4/L5/S1 vertebrae, entailing the complete removal of the L4/L5 and L5/S1 discs, and removal of the





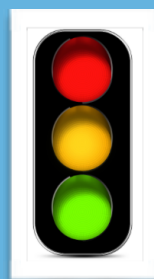
laminar from the three vertebrae. Initially, stabilisation was achieved using titanium rods and screws, but the long-term solution has been realised through a bone graft, effectively fusing the L4, L5 and S1 vertebrae together into a single bone mass.

Steve has made a phenomenal recovery, aided initially by physio treatments and—in time—by returning to Pilates classes. Today, he only suffers a slight loss of flexibility. Looking to the future, Steve needs to be careful that the fused section of spine does not place additional stress on the higher L3/L4 joint, or on the lower sacroiliac joint. To optimise his back health, Steve continues to use a combination of regular Pilates, complemented by physio treatments as needed.

To summarise Steve's case history, the combination of physiotherapy and Pilates afforded him targeted and tailored pain relief for many years before surgical intervention; it helped prepare Steve for surgery; it provided a key element in his successful and speedy rehab; and it continues to deliver an effective ongoing maintenance strategy to protect his back as he now gets on with his life.

## Traffic Light Exercises

Are you so time poor that you struggle to find time to exercise? Well the good news is that between classes, you can work on various muscle groups in the comfort of your own car. So next time you get caught by a red light, don't get frustrated; instead, take the opportunity to pump out a few reps of your favourite Traffic Light Exercise!



### Scapula Retraction

This exercise is good for posture and will help prevent the dreaded "Dowager's Hump"!

- Tuck your chin in and—if you can—rest the base of your head against the head-rest of your seat.
- Take your hands off the steering wheel and rest the back of your arms against the back support of the car seat. Have your elbows by your side at 90 degrees. Keep your shoulders away from your ears.
- Take a breath in to prepare.
- Then—as you breath out—draw your tummy in, keep your chin tucked in and press the back of your arms back against the car seat. You will feel the area in between your shoulder blades gently arch away from the seat.
- Breath in and release. Feel the area between your shoulder blades relax back to their starting position.
- Repeat this 5-10 times. Or until the lights turn green!

## European Tour

### Pilates classes unaffected by absence!

Please note that I will be away from Saturday 4 June to Friday 15 July, as I will be travelling to Europe.

As well as catching up with family and friends during the trip, I will also be presenting a Pilates workshop in London.

As two of the weeks of my trip fall during school holidays, I will only miss the last three weeks of Term 2 and the first week of Term 3. Moreover, as the Queen's Birthday holiday also falls within this period, I will actually only miss three Mondays in total.

I am hoping to organise for somebody to fill in for me while I am away, both to take my classes and to cover my physiotherapy patients.

As such, the Term dates for Term 2 are as listed on Page 1, although for the last three weeks there will be a different face at the front of the class!

If you don't think you can live without me for the period I am overseas, I would strongly encourage you to dust off my Pilates DVD and use that in my absence, as I'm sure you already do during the school holidays!

If you haven't already bought one, I still have some for sale.

