



Hard core exercise

How do Claudia Schiffer, Eva Herzigova and Jemima Khan stay in such great shape? They've all discovered an intense exercise system that strengthens their 'internal girdle'



Claudia Schiffer may have had a few traditional German Christmas treats over the holidays, but she plans to stay slim and healthy in 2010, especially as she's expecting her third child.

"Every year, my resolution is the same: to be good to myself and my body," Claudia tells HELLO!. "This means eating well and exercising regularly." For Claudia, that involves going to TenPilates, the Dynamic Pilates classes that are taking London by storm.

"The combination of the Reformer [a spring-loaded machine] and the pumped-up, intense workout really works wonders. I'm in better shape now than I was in my twenties," says Claudia.

The reason TenPilates is so loved by supermodels, yummy mummies and celebrities alike is that it focuses on core strength. "So many people speak about core

Neil Dimmock (above), head trainer at TenPilates Mayfair, helps train people to use the Reformer machine (below). Claudia Schiffer (right) swears by Reformer Pilates



strength and stability without really knowing what it means," says Neil Dimmock, head trainer at TenPilates Mayfair in central London. "Your core is a network of muscles that stabilises your mid-body. They include your abdominals and pelvic floor and, for women, they function like an internal, old-fashioned girdle." They also hold the key to that long, lean, supermodel look so many women crave.

"The trouble is, most of us lead a sedentary life, sitting at a desk or slumped on the sofa, which weakens and misaligns the muscles in the core," explains Neil. "Add to that the effect that having a baby has on your core muscles and you can see why core strength is so important for women."

With a strong core, you'll have less back pain, greater flexibility, a flatter stomach and a cinched-in waist. Over time, your body will be better aligned and will work in the way it was designed to.

"When your core is engaged and strong, you stand tall, with your shoulders back and pelvis tucked under, and your stomach

is strong and flat. In turn, this strengthens and firms your thighs, bottom, arms and legs. Your entire body looks and feels better," promises Neil. If you can't get to a class that strengthens your core muscles, you can try the simple but effective exercises below – designed by the master trainers at TenPilates – to get you started.

Leg extensions

Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and your shoulders and upper back relaxed. Raise your knees towards you until your thighs make a 90-degree angle with your torso, then raise your feet until your lower legs are in a table-top position. Gently flatten the small of your back against the floor to engage your core muscles. Now slowly move one leg away from you until it's fully extended. Hold for two seconds, then slowly return to the table-top position. Repeat, breathing out as you extend your leg, and breathing in as you hold. After 20 extensions, repeat with the other leg.

Hip raises

Lie on your back with your feet flat on the floor and your heels against your bottom. Tilt your pelvis back to engage your core. Breathe in and, as you breathe out, raise your hips until your torso is in a straight, sloping line from ribs to knees. Hold for four seconds, then breathe in and slowly lower your bottom to the floor again as you breathe out. Repeat ten times.

The plank

Get on all fours, walk backwards on your knees and bend your arms, with your forearms flat on the floor. Breathe in, extend the legs and support yourself on your tiptoes, elbows and forearms, keeping your body in a 'plank' position at the same level as your head, or slightly lower. Hold for ten seconds, then relax and sit back on your heels for five seconds with arms outstretched and forehead on the floor. Repeat the plank six times.

● *The three TenPilates studios in London are in Notting Hill, Chiswick and Mayfair. It costs £12.50 for the first class, with subsequent classes from £16.50 each. Private personal training sessions are available from £80. Visit TenPilates.com.*

