

## Product review

### APPI Pilates for Pregnancy

APPI Health Group, London, 2009, 50 min,  
DVD-Video, £18.50  
www.appihealthgroup.com

This DVD from the Australian Physiotherapy and Pilates Institute (APPI) promotes a modified Pilates workout throughout the childbearing year for all women who have an uncomplicated pregnancy. It offers guidance on how to cope with some common pregnancy-related discomforts by performing a variety of exercises. The focus of *APPI Pilates for Pregnancy* is on addressing posture, promoting lumbopelvic stability and introducing pelvic floor muscle (PFM) training (PFMT).

The DVD is divided into an introduction and a Pilates class. In the introduction, APPI co-founder Elisa Withers explains what Pilates means to her and how it has helped her to enjoy pregnancy, and invites women who are fit and well to follow the workout. While the key areas of this exercise regime are highlighted (e.g. postural alignment,

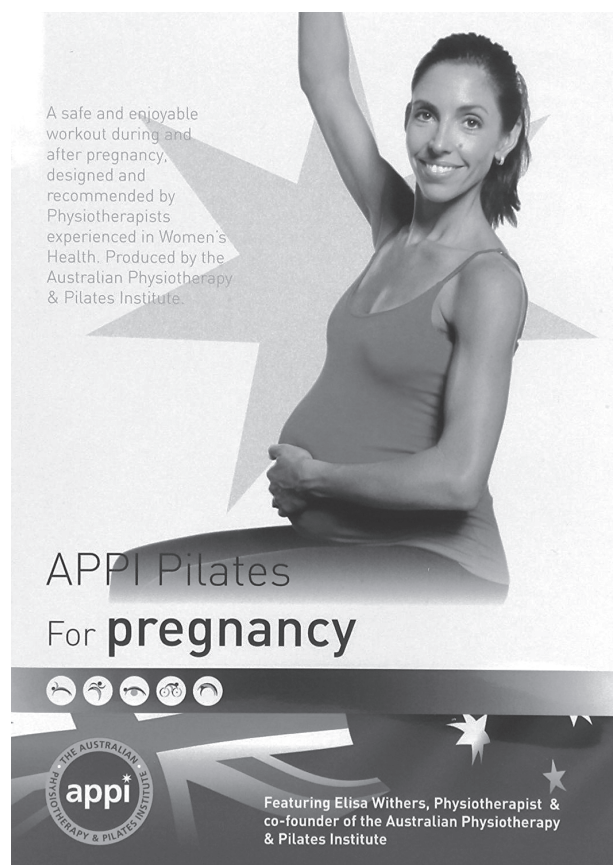
the PFMs and engaging “the centre”), more educational and functional justifications would provide viewers with a stronger understanding of the background to this approach. For example, explanations of why rounding of the chest and shoulders may happen in pregnancy, and/or how the condition influences the postural changes in the body would be useful.

In modified Pilates, pre-contracting the centre is an important part of promoting lumbopelvic stability and rehabilitation. This subject is difficult to teach remotely, so perhaps this is why the explanation is brief. Viewers are left to choose between pre-contracting the transversus abdominis (TrA) or the PFMs. It would perhaps be more beneficial if visual aids, such as animation or graphics, were used during the introduction to the anatomy and function of the PFMs. This would help to increase the viewers’ understanding of how the TrA, diaphragm and PFMs are synchronized. In doing so, the breathing component could be more effectively integrated, promoting better PFM recruitment and function.

What is inspiring and encouraging is that the class is taught to two pregnant participants by a physiotherapist. This section is well paced, and beginners will easily follow it. The warm-up section systematically goes through segmental mobility and muscle groups, and focuses on thoracic and ribcage mobility, postural alignment, and balance. Moreover, plenty of exercises are performed while standing, and postural correction is carefully explained and encouraged throughout.

It is difficult to achieve the balance between providing too little and too much information in an instructional video made for the general public. With regard to pelvic girdle pain (PGP), the modifications could be more consistently taught (e.g. the lunging position and side-lying series). In the main section, a resistance band is used for toning in the standing and long-sitting positions. While the selection of upper body movements with the band is excellent, I suspect that this workout may be too long and slightly fatiguing for new mothers and Pilates beginners. In addition, the long-sitting position may be quite challenging for those who are new to Pilates.

The cover blurb of the DVD states that the special attention has been paid to the PFMs.



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However, the instructions inadequately describe these muscles, and there is a lack of verbal and visual cueing of integrated and isolated PFMT. This may reflect the year in which this DVD was filmed (2009), which predates the current, emerging evidence about teaching PFMT.

*APPI Pilates for Pregnancy* is not intended for women with a history of PGP and PFM dysfunction, and would be unsuitable for them. For the postnatal population, APPI has recently updated and published online modified individual and group Pilates classes (APPI 2018). Although the antenatal update is still under development, this pregnancy DVD represents a practical and enjoyable primer for all uncomplicated, healthy

pregnant women who have already had an individual introduction to the modified Pilates concept.

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### **Reference**

Australian Physiotherapy and Pilates Institute (APPI)  
*Online Classes*. [WWW document.] URL <https://www.appihealthgroup.com/Education/Online-Classes>