

# Osteoporosis: Prevent Spinal Compression Fractures with Pilates Training

Decompress the spine with good Pilates posture & mechanics.

The first and most common concern I get from someone newly diagnosed with osteopenia or osteoporosis is not fear of painful fractures but, “how can I maintain or correct my posture?”



When you visualize what osteoporosis looks like the first thought is usually that stereotypical upper spine hump. This curve is called kyphosis. A small degree of this is normal in the upper spine but the increased size of this curve in an osteoporotic individual is often due to irreversible compression fractures of the spine. These compression fractures most of the time are not painful but they can be so prevention is ideal. The key word here is compression. If we can decompress the spine, we can prevent future fractures and it turns out Pilates is great at this.

# Pilates Alignment for Spinal Decompression



One of the benefits of Pilates exercise is the detailed instruction on how to lengthen your torso in order to decrease tension, strain and compression in the spine. The first step in Pilates is to learn Pilates alignment and how to engage your “core” in order to decompress the spine. See the pictures below to see what this looks like standing. Then one learns how to move while maintaining this elongated spine. The third step is to integrate this training into your daily movements unconsciously. No one can be perfect with their posture constantly unless they train it to be an unconscious habit.

The best way to learn how to do these things effectively is to work with a qualified and experienced certified Pilates instructor although a good physical therapist can get you started as well.

To get an idea of what spinal decompression looks like check out the picture below:

Ear lines up with shoulder

Sternum is vertical

Lower ribs and sternum align with pubic bone

The pubic bone and front 2 hip bones line up in the same plane (see photo 2)

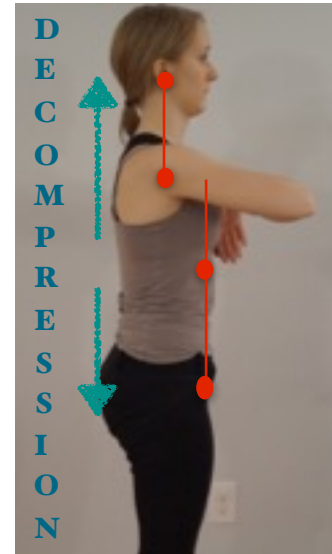


Photo 1: Decompressive Pilates Alignment



Photo 2: Aligning pubic bone with 2 front hip bones in the same plane.

Don't be discouraged if you can't immediately line up all these points, some people won't ever be able to due to irreversible changes in their bone structure. However, making the effort to accomplish this alignment can decompress the spine thereby improving posture, decreasing strain and ultimately decreasing your fracture risk.