

Pilates is an excellent cross training activity for runners.

1. Pilates is Low Impact

Running is a high impact activity. Choosing a low impact activity on your cross training days will help your joints recover.

2. Core Strengthening

Strong core muscles keep your spine and pelvis stable. The large hip and knee muscles important for speed and endurance in running attach to the spine and pelvis. These leg muscles are able to pull more efficiently when the core is stable and strong, improving your speed and/or endurance.

3. Flexibility

Pilates improves flexibility in all the major muscle groups that are prone to tightness in runners: hip flexors, piriformis, quadriceps, hamstrings, ITB, calf/achilles tendon

4. Proper Running Form

Pilates' exercises are broken down into component parts to teach the proper movement pattern and then progressed by decreasing support, increasing resistance, changing body position and increasing the complexity of the movement. Proper body position is incorporated into all Pilates' exercises. Even if a body part is not active during a particular exercise, it is resting in a specific position and alignment. The vast repertoire of Pilates' exercises that are performed in different positions and on various pieces of equipment help us as Pilates' instructors identify movement faults and then correct them.

5. Helps Prevent Overuse Injuries (that are not from over-training)

Overuse injuries are often caused by muscle imbalances and improper running form. Muscle imbalances occur when a muscle on one side of the joint is tight and/or the muscle on the other side of the joint is weak. This can either cause an abnormal pull on the joint or it can cause a strain in the muscle that has to repeatedly work to pull against the tight muscle on the other side of the joint. Pilates' exercises help to improve this muscle balance. Proper running form is addressed in #4 above.

6. Posture and Breath

Pilates' exercises improve your awareness of your body position and the way you move your body. There is also a focus on proper breathing. As you fatigue with longer distance running, you will have a better awareness of where your form and posture has broken down and how to correct it. Focus on breathing will also help.