

Positive spin

Gyrotonic™ is a deep working, stretching and releasing system that looks set to be the next Pilates. The secret's in the circles, **Jill Cartwright** learns

The machines used are designed and built around the human body.

Benefits of Gyrotonic™

- Reduces back, neck and shoulder problems.
- Increases range of motion and flexibility.
- Improves posture.
- It has ante-natal benefits.
- Strengthens core muscles.
- Creates space in the joints.
- Releases tension.
- Rehabilitates and prevents further injury.
- Improves blood circulation.
- Enhances balance and coordination.

You may not have heard of Gyrotonic™ before – but you soon will. This system is pegged to be the biggest thing

since Pilates and looks set to impact the British exercise scene as much as yoga did in the '90s.

Gyrotonic™, which means circular toning, is a series of motions and breathing patterns designed to tone your body, both inside and out, and is performed on a piece of equipment, known as The Tower, rigged with weights, cables and pulleys. The Tower was developed by

Romanian former ballet dancer Juliu Horvath, and works on the principles of movement that are common in yoga, swimming, dance and gymnastics – and it

everyone says that at first,' she laughs, 'but your body is going to love it!'

The machines used are designed and built around the human body, with

an aim to create total freedom of movement, improved coordination, strength and flexibility. Working on a basis of circular movements, the machines work to manipulate every joint in the body in its

total range of movement.

This is different from systems such as Pilates that work on linear movement and muscle isolation. 'In a full Gyrotonic™ class, the aim is to work every joint in the

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is quite medieval in appearance!

'It looks like quite the torture chamber in here,' I comment to Tisha Harrington scanning the equipment room at her north London-based Kings Cross Studios. 'Yes,

body in its every range of movement,' says Tisha. 'from the joints in your fingers and your wrists to your toes to your knees to your hip sockets, so you're giving your body a full workout and every joint is being addressed in absolutely every way that it can move.'

The work is not aerobic, but there is a lot of cardiovascular stimulation, and the class can be gentle and rehabilitative or vigorous and energising depending on how rapidly the moves are done.

As it is still quite new to the UK and the equipment is quite hefty, most classes are still on a basis of one-to-one, although Tisha has opened intimate group classes of no more than four people. With the individual guidance of private sessions, however, classes can be tailored to suit the specific needs of your body.

If you have an injury, doing Gyrotonic™ can be beneficial as it doesn't put any pressure on the joints and encourages fresh blood flow into areas where scar tissue may have built up and thereby speeding up the recovery process.

Gyrotonic™ is also reported to have beneficial effects for people suffering from back, neck and shoulder problems, as well as knee injuries, RSI (repetitive strain injury), scoliosis and frozen shoulder.

Hands-on instruction

Tisha is very much a hands-on instructor, and gave me some excellent guidance throughout my session – gently reminding me to draw in my stomach, activate my core, or straighten my arms, and gently adding traction – drawing on the joint to extend its range – which

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created an amazing release in my shoulder that hours sitting at a desk typing had made me crave.

'The hands-on work is very important,' says Tisha, 'in order to help people really understand the idea of creating space within their own bodies and finding their

full range of movement. Tractioning helps get a release of the muscle so that the muscles that weren't able to work because of the tension can then get a chance to kick in.'

Another favourite exercise of mine involved holding onto the parallel bars with my bum hovering slightly off the floor and my feet on the revolving paddle and spinning my legs alternately one under the other. Tisha calls this exercise 'the hip-hop' but as my arms trembled and my core went wobbly, I was far from achieving the look of any expert!

My favourite exercise had to be the one Tisha gave me to finish off my session. Climbing the wooden frame, I inserted my legs between two padded rungs, hooking my ankles over to keep steady, and just let myself hang. 'This allows the spine to stretch and the blood to oxygenate the upper body,' Tisha says.

I gently let myself down, flushed with energy and feeling stretched. Yes, it looks quite medieval, I thought, but Tisha was right, my body absolutely loved it! (v)

Where can I do it?

Studios around London mostly offer personal sessions of around £55 for 90 minutes. Tisha Harrington at Kings Cross Studios runs group classes for about £25. Below are the contact details across the country...

London
www.kingscrossstudios.co.uk
www.studioseventyfour.co.uk

Edinburgh
www.schoolhouse-studios.com

Glasgow
www.pennywithers.co.uk

Oxford
email: wizzpot@aol.com

Norwich
email: natalia@pitatesstudicouk.co.uk



Who benefits?

Children: Gyrotonic™ training encourages the natural flexibility and of a child's body, promoting a more supple physique. In a fun, non-competitive atmosphere, it can teach strength and coordination as youngsters learn healthy, injury preventing movement habits.

Sports and cross-training: It is also a great training programme for keen sportspeople. Athletes who benefit from these workouts include runners, golfers and ice skaters, as well as baseball, hockey and tennis players.

Dancers: This type of training was initially created by a dancer for dancers. The system was designed to strengthen and lengthen the body so that dancers can achieve their maximum potential.

Injury rehabilitation: Many health experts regard it as one of the best physical therapies available for their patients for the treatment of injuries, plus aches and pains.

Older exercisers: It also provides the perfect exercise system for older exercisers at any level of fitness. It is reportedly very successful treating arthritis, back pain, and neck stiffness.