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**Avoid injury and improve ski fitness to ensure success on the slopes this season with essential advice from Hannah Epps of Farnham Pilates...**

### Preparation is everything

Endurance for skiing is only one element but you need: an aerobic base (essential for recovery), a high lactate threshold (so you can ski longer before you feel the burn) and lactate power (which provides the oomph you need for intense efforts).

To prepare for this, do a cardio workout three to five times a week three months before your trip from 20 to 90 minutes increase the time slowly. Exercises such as lunges and squat jumps are a great way to strengthen the thighs and mimic the skiing position. Pilates also covers many of these elements to prepare your body.

### Ski fit: The essential exercises

#### 1. Spine twists

##### *For: Spine mobility*

Sit with hands supporting chin and elbows out. Twist right, keeping hips still, shoulders down, while lifting up the torso. Repeat left. Next, lie down, knees bent and gently move knees from left to right to encourage hip flexibility and stabilise upper-body.

#### 2. The plank

##### *For: Core stability and back stabilising*

To progress lift to push-up position, keeping shoulders down, neck long. With feet parallel, pull abdominals in and hold the position. Challenge yourself by lifting one arm or leg, or by lifting an arm and twisting or punching to the side or ceiling. Good to breathe wide and deeply to open the ribs.

#### 3. Hip opener

##### *For: Hip and core stability strengthening*

Lie on your back with feet flat on floor. Let the knee drop to the side without moving hips, change legs. Try lifting the leg at a right angle, keeping pelvis still.

#### 4. Dart

##### *For: Posture and to counter-balance the forward position of skiing*

Lie on your front, arms at sides, palms facing body, neck long, legs parallel with toes pointing. Lengthen through spine. Breathe out, pulling shoulder blades down and lifting upper body a few inches. Keep looking at the floor.

#### 5. The criss-cross

##### *For: Abdominal strengthening and pelvic stability*

On your back, place legs in table-top position. With hands behind head and elbows wide, exhale, pull abs in and curl upper torso off mat. Keeping elbows open, rotate upper torso moving left shoulder toward the hip to outside of right knee. Extend left leg to 45-degree angle (higher easier, lower harder). Inhale, come to centre, then alternate. Increase pace for cv work then slow it down to make harder on the obliques.

#### 6. Scissors

##### *For: Increased strength in legs, abdominals and lower back, also shoulder stabilisation. Maintain neutral in your lower back.*

Lie on your back, raise one leg keeping the other foot flat on the floor, then lower the toe towards the floor. Progress to both legs lifted and scissor action with the legs bent or straight.

#### 7. Stretches

Try to remember after a day's skiing to stretch your chest by putting your hands together behind your back, do some side bends, stretch thighs and hamstrings, and the ankles by pushing your heel down behind you - easily done in the après ski bar! Remember to enjoy your holiday - keep your joints mobile and warm up to prevent injuries - see you on the slopes!

*Hannah runs classical advanced Pilates, a six-week course for Skiers in January and February on Wednesdays at 8.30pm in Rowledge.*

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