

Pink Pilates – GOES LOCAL

More women across the country can now benefit from a highly successful subsidised rehabilitation and exercise programme specifically for women with breast cancer.

Set up by Auckland physiotherapist Lou James, the Pink Pilates programme focuses on the physical and mental wellbeing of breast cancer survivors. It blends clinical pilates, manual physiotherapy, massage, breathing techniques and exercise prescription and is supported by the NZBCF and top breast cancer surgeons throughout New Zealand.

Four years ago, Aucklander Lou James founded Pink Pilates, a personalized therapeutic exercise programme designed to help women recover from surgery and treatment for breast cancer and to improve the quality of life for women living with secondary breast cancer.

Supported by the Pink Pilates Trust and the NZBCF, the subsidised programme was first available only to women within two years of their initial diagnosis but now the ten session course is being offered at the same low cost to women within two years of a secondary breast cancer diagnosis.

Women pay \$10 per session and after completion of the ten, further individual sessions can be undertaken at a cost of approximately \$55 per session. 'The first ten sessions prepare women for either joining a class, more individual sessions or carrying on by themselves, incorporating the exercises into their lifestyle,' says Lou. 'All our programmes are tailored to meet the individual needs of ladies taking part.'

Women work with her own personal physiotherapist to increase flexibility and mobility, relieve areas of stiffness or tightness, enhance relaxation, reduce stress levels, improve overall physical stamina, energy and wellbeing and raise the spirit.

Pink Pilates is appropriate for all fitness levels and the three phases of the programme are designed to benefit all women experiencing breast cancer: 'post-operative' assists with healing after surgery to restore flexibility and mobility; 'recovery' helps enhance energy levels, improve sleep and overall wellbeing and manage other treatment side effects; 'fitness' is designed to improve general

Pink pilates –giving women with breast cancer strength. September 2009

conditioning, physical stamina and to encourage good exercise habits. The timing and emphasis of these elements within each individual programme is planned at the first hour-long session where the physiotherapist will discuss the participant's needs and determine a balance appropriate for each woman. The following nine half-hour sessions are designed to suit the needs of the participant on the day.

Pink Pilates is now available in 24 locations nationwide from Invercargill to Whangarei .

Invercargill, Dunedin, Queenstown, Timaru, Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington, Masterton, Palmerston North, New Plymouth, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Taupo, Rotorua, Tauranga, Hamilton, South Auckland, East/West/Central and North Auckland, Whangaparaoa and Whangarei.

Lou and Pink Pilates Clinical Director, Auckland Breast Physician Dr Sonja Freese, continue to expand the programme, meeting with medical professionals to explain the benefits of Pink Pilates, sourcing local physiotherapists and training them to deliver the specialised course. 'Physios must be certified to deliver Pink Pilates,' says Lou. 'They complete a special training course to ensure they are aware of the particular needs our women have.' The ultimate goal is to ensure all women can enjoy the programme, even in rural areas.

Lou and Sonja hope that the Pink Pilates programme will increase awareness of how important prescribed rehabilitation can be for women experiencing breast cancer. 'We want to inspire those affected by cancer to commit to a moderate exercise schedule that will allow them to feel more a part of the real world, less like cancer patients and stronger in heart, soul, body and mind.'

For a complete list of providers and locations, and to register for information, please www.pinkpilates.co.nz.