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Sit Down to Wake Up

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Increase your energy levels and shrink your belly in minutes a day with a totally different way of moving

By [Alyssa Shaffer](#)

What if you could boost your energy levels--not to mention flatten your belly, strengthen your back, and improve your flexibility--in just minutes a day, without even standing up? That's the genius behind Gyrokinesis, a seated workout that combines the core-strengthening benefits of Pilates, the flexibility of yoga, the grace of dance, the fluidity of swimming, and the energy lift of tai chi in one simple, dynamic routine.

"Most types of exercise use linear motions--forward and back or side to side. Gyrokinesis is more about three-dimensional movements, including spirals and circles," explains Justine Bernard, DPT, a physical therapist in Washington, DC. These actions better mimic the way your body moves in everyday life to target more muscles--including your deepest abs--and work your joints in a greater range of motion.

Gyrokinesis was created in the late '70s by Juliu Horvath, a former ballet dancer from Romania, after he suffered a career-ending injury. While it's helped many dancers, including Bernard, recover from debilitating injuries, the practice is growing and helping even nondancers. Ten years ago, there were only about 175 studios worldwide offering Gyrokinesis; today, there are more than 2,000--and 6,200 instructors.

Unlike yoga, which requires a certain amount of strength and flexibility, Gyrokinesis can be done while sitting on a low stool or chair, making it easy for people at any fitness level and a perfect at-your-desk workout. And doing flowing movements increases your heart rate and breathing to carry more energizing oxygen throughout your body. "When I did it in the morning, it gave me a big boost that stayed with me for hours," says Avery Brandon, 41, of New York City, one of our readers who road-tested our 15-minute routine for 2 weeks.

Our seated Gyrokinesis workout includes 3 series of exercises. You can do them all together for a total-body energizer or spread them throughout the day for on-the-spot pick-me-ups. Along with avoiding the afternoon slump, you'll stand taller, feel tighter, and notice fewer [aches and pains](#)--in just 2 weeks.

THE EXPERT

Justine Bernard, DPT, physical therapist, Gyrokinesis master trainer, and owner of Elements Fitness and Wellness Center in Washington, DC, designed this workout.

Workout at a Glance

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

A stool or armless chair

WHAT TO DO

Complete each series (Abs & Back, Legs & Hips, and Upper Body) 3 times, then move on to the next. Keep the motion smooth and continuous, breathing deeply through your nose.

HOW OFTEN

Do the [workout](#) 3 to 7 days a week. It's a perfect get-started routine for beginners. If you already exercise, you can use it as a warm-up.

Series 1

ABS & BACK

Tones your core and increases spinal flexibility. Do each exercise 4 times (on each side when appropriate), moving smoothly from start to finish, before going on to the next. Repeat the series 3 times.

1. ARCH AND CURL



Sit with feet more than hip-width apart, toes out, hands on thighs. Inhale and arch spine, lifting chest and gazing at ceiling (A). Keep shoulders over hips. Exhale. Inhale and sit up, lengthening spine. Keep abs pulled in throughout. Exhale and round spine forward, looking at floor about 6 feet in front of you, feeling a stretch in low back (B). Don't let chin drop to chest. Inhale as you sit up.

2. SPIRAL



Sit tall, hands on thighs. Inhale as you lengthen spine, pulling in abdominals. Exhale and rotate torso to left as far as comfortable, sliding left hand to hip, eyes gazing over [left shoulder](#). Inhale as you return to center. Repeat, switching hands as you rotate to right.

3. SIDE ARCH



Sit tall with legs wide. Inhale as you lengthen spine and pull in abdominals. Exhale and reach right arm out to side, then overhead, bending to left (left hand presses toward floor). Push left foot into floor, feeling stretch along right side. Inhale as you hold. Exhale and return to center; inhale. Repeat with left arm, bending to right and pressing right foot into floor.

4. WAVE



Sit tall with hands on thighs, feet wide. Inhale, arching spine; exhale lower torso toward floor as far as you comfortably can, keeping back arched (A). Round spine, curling up one vertebra at a time (B), as you inhale and lengthen spine, returning to start position.

Series 2

LEGS & HIPS

Strengthens your abs and legs and stretches your hips to prevent or reduce knee and back pain. Do all 3 moves first with the left leg, then with the right, 1 time each. Repeat, completing the series 3 times.

1. LEG EXTENSION



Sit tall on edge of stool, feet flat on floor, hands on seat back for support, fingers pointing forward. Inhale, then exhale and extend left leg, foot flexed, knee toward ceiling, heel reaching forward. Hold and inhale. Keep abdominals tight throughout.

2. CROSS OVER



From leg extension, exhale and cross left ankle over right knee, keeping foot flexed; place hands on bent leg for support. With abs tight, lean forward, gently pressing on left thigh.

3. SIDE KICK

From Cross Over, inhale back into leg extension with left leg, foot flexed. Exhale, bend leg back in, and extend to left side like you're kicking. Lower flexed foot so inside edge is on floor, knee pointing forward. Place [left arm](#) on left thigh, palm up. Reach right arm overhead, palm up, and bend to left, feeling a stretch on right side of torso and left inner thigh. Hold for a second, then return to starting position. Repeat series from beginning, this time with right leg.

Series 3

UPPER BODY

Stretches upper back and shoulders to improve posture. Do each move 4 times, as described, and complete the series 3 times.

1. OVERHEAD CIRCLES



Sit tall with legs wide, toes pointing out. Interlace fingers, reaching arms overhead as you inhale, palms facing ceiling, elbows slightly bent, abs tight. Exhale as you bend to right side, keeping arms overhead, and circle forward, rounding spine. Inhale as you circle to left and back, arching spine. Circle 4 times, moving in a fluid motion with abs tight. Repeat, circling in the opposite direction 4 times.

2. BIG YAWNS



Sit tall, hands on thighs, legs wide. Inhale and reach arms forward and up overhead, palms facing body; gently arch spine (A). Straighten and rotate arms so palms face forward and arms are open wide, reaching toward sky (B). Exhale and circle arms back and down. Do 4 times.