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Bottom Line's Daily Health News®

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- **Give Gyrotonic Exercise a Whirl!** -- Gyrotonic Exercise Goes Round and Round...

GIVE GYROTONIC EXERCISE A WHIRL!

It's easier to exercise regularly if you enjoy it, so I always like to find different ways people can get a workout. I recently learned about one called Gyrokinesis, developed in the mid-1970s by a charming Hungarian dancer and yogi named Juliu Horvath... and I have to say, it's like no other exercise I've ever encountered.

Gyrokinesis workouts (and another version developed from it called the Gyrotonic Expansion System) are based on circular movements... can be performed at different levels of intensity... and can benefit virtually everyone, including older adults who may be timid about starting a formal program. Its fans use words like "fun" and "playful" to describe it, and that's not something we often hear about working out.

ROUND AND ROUND...

Like Pilates, this form of exercise can be done on equipment in studios or without equipment -- you can take classes or do it on your own at home. To learn more about it, I spoke with Matt Aversa, vice president and COO of Gyrotonic International, the company that sells the equipment for the Gyrotonic system. He told me that while this method of exercise incorporates some elements of dance, yoga, t'ai chi, gymnastics and swimming, it is quite unique...

It's spherical in nature. Where Pilates (and other forms of exercise) are linear -- meaning movements go up, down and sideways, Gyrokinesis incorporates lots of twisting, swaying, circling the body from the waist and undulating through the spine, which allows multiple muscle groups to be worked at the same time. All this is accompanied by carefully prescribed breathing patterns, such as inhaling during expansive (or opening) movements and exhaling where movements contract or close.

It's highly unlikely to cause injury. Aversa told me that Gyrotonic exercise is especially efficient because the muscles, tendons, joints and ligaments all get challenged during its nonimpact routines.

Routines expand from one core. Even though Gyrokinesis can be done at numerous levels, Aversa says that lessons are always conducted in a "layering fashion," explaining that workouts begin with earlier learned skills, gradually exaggerating and intensifying according to your ability.

HIGH-TECH, LOW-TECH

There are Gyrotonic studios where you exercise on specially designed machinery, working one on one with an instructor or in a group class, some of which use equipment while others do not. Costs vary depending on where you live -- a group Gyrokinesis class can start at about \$10, and time with a private trainer costs \$45 to \$75 or more per session. Look online at the Gyrotonic International Web site, www.gyrotonic.com/ to find a class (or certified instructor) near you.

If you want to give the simplest version of this exercise a whirl, the site also sells DVDs (\$25 to \$30) for at-home Gyrokinesis practice and offers free video demonstrations. Here are three moves you can try at home. For all three, start by sitting comfortably on a stool or chair, feet flat on the floor, and perform them in a rhythmic, undulating fashion for three to five minutes each.

- **Arch and Curl** -- sit with your legs spread comfortably in a "V," feet planted flat on the floor and hands resting on your knees. Now smoothly curl your spine into a "C" shape, looking at your belly button... without breaking your motion, uncurl your spine and angle your chest bone up while looking toward the ceiling and arching your back. Repeat this pattern in an easy, fluid way. [Click here to view the video.](#)
- **Side Bend** -- return to a neutral spine (shoulders over hips, spine upright) and bring your left ear to your left shoulder while simultaneously raising your right arm, palm of your hand up, to reach for the ceiling, thus opening up your right side. Now reverse the flow, right ear to right shoulder, left arm up to open up the left side, bringing your right arm down... continue this pattern.
- **Spiraling Twist** -- again, return to neutral spine with your hands resting lightly on your knees. Leading with your eyes, look behind you to the right and then to the left in a flowing manner. Do this over and over, moving more of your body by "looking around," using your chest and allowing your torso to rotate. The entire spine should begin to bend and weave from side to side in a circular manner.

In Germany and Korea, orthopedic clinics now utilize Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis exercises and the approach has been shown helpful for scoliosis and osteoporosis (even increasing bone density)... so it's possible that your doctor may someday even recommend these techniques as treatment. Why not get ahead of the curve by giving them a try now?

Source(s):

Matt Aversa, vice president and COO of Gyrotonic International, Dingmans Ferry, Pennsylvania, www.gyrotonic.com.