

# Hop on the Massage Chair



Take a load off already—without spending \$100+ on a spa treatment. This feel-good routine on the EXO Chair will alleviate muscle tension, center your mind and reinvigorate your entire body.

Workout by Amy Cady

**W**e have to admit that when Pilates instructor Amy Cady told us that, after performing her workout, we'd feel like we just got a full-body massage, we were a tad skeptical. But after we completed the routine, our muscles felt considerably more relaxed and, at the same time, completely energized. And our minds felt at ease and in focus.

Although Amy, a pre/postnatal Master Teacher for The Center for Women's Fitness, originally designed this routine, which won't stress the spine, for pregnant women, she soon discovered that it worked wonders for the body and mind of all populations and levels.

"My pregnant moms say that it helps with alignment and back pain, while other clients (of all levels) enjoy the stretching while still feeling challenged. Additionally, seniors benefit from the exercises by gaining balance and increased support," says Amy.

The flowing, total-body workout stimulates circulation and releases tension with gentle, rhythmic stretching of large muscle groups while focusing the mind and activating muscles with deep breathing. It also energizes the entire body with spine mobilization and stabilization. Amy chose to perform the routine using Balanced Body's EXO Chair because of its compact nature and versatility, but it can be performed on any Wunda Chair. Do the workout at least three times per week or as a warm up to another routine. Oh, and get ready to say, "ahhhh."

PHOTO: SHOT AT RHYTHM PILATES BY ROD FOSTER; HAIR BY HEATHER PUHEK, MAKEUP BY KATIE VOLLMER; OUTFIT BY PRANA

## Piriformis Stretch

**APPARATUS SETUP:** 1 H1-H2 for Exo or 1 on setting 2

**PURPOSE:** increases spinal articulation; deeply stretches the spine; stretches piriformis muscle (located deep in the gluteal area; responsible for laterally rotating and abducting the thigh).

**SETUP:** Standing behind the Chair, bend your right leg and place it on top of the Chair (ideally at a 90 degree angle if you can). Extend your left leg straight back on the floor, standing on your toes and placing your arms at your sides. Arch your back slightly.

**1** Inhale to prepare. Exhale as you roll down and over your right leg, rounding your back and placing your hands on the foot pedal and pushing the pedal all the way down to the floor.

**2** Inhale, then exhale, rolling your body back up as you resist the pedal. Do 3 repetitions. Repeat on your other side.

**TIPS:** Articulate your spine as you arch and curl. Lengthen your extended leg long in back, gently pressing the pedal down to avoid overstretching.

**MODIFICATIONS:** If your piriformis is tight, don't push the pedal down—just lean forward. If you are pregnant, only roll down halfway during the 2nd and 3rd trimester, keeping your back flat.

**ADVANCED:** Begin with your arms extended above your head and your back slightly arched. As you roll up, bring your arms above your head and circle them around to the side, opening your chest and arching your back.



## Rock and Roll

**APPARATUS SETUP:** None; Eyebolt: Front Top; Tube: Short Yellow; Handle

**PURPOSE:** works the shoulders and triceps; stimulates the abdominals; stretches the pelvic floor; stabilizes the torso; increases circulation.

**SETUP:** Sit on a stability ball facing the front of the Chair, legs parallel and hip-distance apart, toes resting on the Chair's frame. Holding onto the handles, extend your arms down by your sides.

**1** Inhale to prepare. Exhale and, keeping your back arched or flat (depending on your personal comfort level), lean back as far as you can, engaging your abdominals and extending your arms toward the ceiling, palms facing down.

**2** Inhale and slowly return to the starting position.

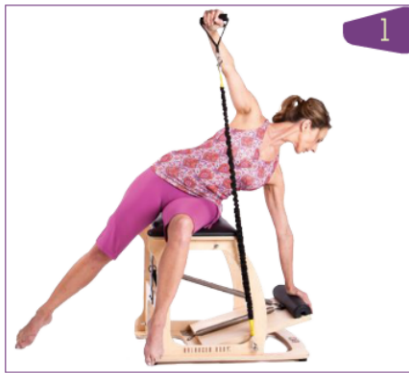
**3** Exhale and, keeping your back flat, lean in toward the Chair, reaching your

arms behind you toward the floor and pressing them back into a tricep press. Do 4 repetitions.

**TIP:** Move through a full range of motion with flow and control.

**MODIFICATION:** Sit tall instead of leaning forward or backward.





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## Oblique Work

**APPARATUS SETUP:** 1 H2-H3 or 1 on setting 2; Eyebolt: Bottom; Tube: Long Yellow; Handle



**PURPOSE:** works and stretches the obliques; teaches pelvic stability; stretches the pectoral muscles.

**SETUP:** Sit on the side of the Chair with your left leg in front of the Chair, knee bent and foot reaching for (or touching, if possible) the floor. Extend your right leg out to your right side, foot reaching for the floor, making sure your torso and legs are in alignment. Place your left hand on the foot pedal, fingers facing the side or front, elbow slightly bent. Holding the handle in your right hand, extend your right arm forward of your body at shoulder height.

**1 Arm Pull:** Inhale to prepare. Exhale and press the foot pedal down toward the floor as you reach your right arm in front of your body, lifting it up toward

the ceiling. Inhale and return to the starting position. Do 4 repetitions. Repeat on your other side.

**2 Open/Close:** Repeat step #1, but as you lift your right arm up toward the ceiling, rotate your torso to your right, opening your chest and reaching your right arm to the right, in the opposite direction of foot pedal arm. Do 4 repetitions. Repeat on your other side.

**TIPS:** Push the pedal down as you reach your other arm in the opposite direction to stretch your obliques. In Open/Close, use your back muscles to move your arm in space, and open your chest as you rotate toward the back. Let your gaze and head follow your hand to maximize the stretch in your neck, back and chest muscles.

**MODIFICATIONS:** If you experience discomfort in your waist, push the pedal down halfway and skip step #2.



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## Leg Press with Biceps and Triceps

**APPARATUS SETUP:** 1 H2 of 1 on setting 2 or 3; Eyebolt: Top; Tube: Short Yellow; Handle



**PURPOSE:** lengthens the spine; works the shoulders, biceps, triceps and hamstrings; activates obliques; increases pelvic and shoulder stability; enhances coordination and balance.

**SETUP:** Stand facing the Chair with your right toes lightly resting on the pedal, right leg bent at a 90 degree angle, and your left leg directly underneath your hip. Holding onto



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the handles, extend your arms out in front of your body with your elbows at shoulder height and palms facing up.

**1 Bicep curl:** Inhale to prepare. Exhale and press the pedal down toward the floor as you curl your arms in toward your body, engaging your biceps. Repeat with your other leg on the pedal. Do 8 repetitions on each side, alternating sides.

**2 Tricep curl:** Return to the starting position, but extend your arms down by your sides, palms facing the back of



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the room. Exhale and press the pedal down toward the floor as you press your arms toward the back of the room, engaging your triceps. Repeat with your other leg on the pedal. Do 8 repetitions on each side, alternating sides.

**TIP:** Keep your shoulders relaxed and your wrists straight throughout.

**MODIFICATION:** If you feel pressure on your shoulder or neck, lower your arms.

## Arch and Curl

**APPARATUS SETUP:** None

**PURPOSE:** warms up the spine, back and shoulders; activates the oblique and back extensor muscles; opens the chest.

**SETUP:** Sit tall with your sitz bones at the front edge of the Chair, toes on the floor and heels lifted hip-distance apart. Extend your arms down by your sides.



**1** Inhale and reach your arms up toward the ceiling, arching your back and opening your chest.

**2** Exhale as you round your back and lower your arms into a wide, curved “hug” position, rotating your torso to your right side.

**3** Return to center, then rotate to your left side. Do 4 repetitions on each side.

**TIPS:** Feel the flow of the exercise from the arch to the curl—try not to stop in between positions.

**MODIFICATIONS:** Rotate through the waist—do not allow your arms and shoulders to lead the rotation. If your range of motion is limited, do not fully rotate to the side.

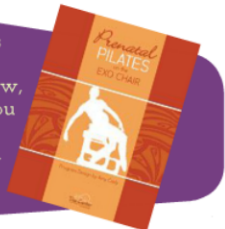
**ADVANCED:** Do the exercise with your legs together.



### Gear Guide

Balanced Body EXO® Chair, Single Pedal (\$745; [www.pilates.com](http://www.pilates.com))  
Stability ball, Spri Exercise Ball (\$39.95; [www.spri.com](http://www.spri.com))

Baby on board? Pick up a copy of Amy's new manual, *Prenatal Pilates on the Exo Chair*, which masterfully incorporates flow, stability and gentle stretching to help you feel—and look—great throughout your pregnancy (\$22.95; [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). View her prenatal workout class at [www.PilatesAnytime.com](http://www.PilatesAnytime.com).



PMA-certified Amy Cady is the owner of ABC Pilates® in Laguna Niguel, CA. In addition to holding a MFA in dance from University of California, Irvine, Amy is a certified pre/postnatal Master Teacher for The Center for Women's Fitness. The mother of two is also a Balanced Body University Partner Faculty member and teaches BBU curriculum for the ABC Pilates Teacher Training Program, which is included in the Pilates Method Alliance Registry of Schools. For more information, visit her website, [www.abcpilates.com](http://www.abcpilates.com).