

# PILATES AND SNOW BOARDING

Snow boarding is slowly growing since it was invented in 1965 reaching a peak in the 1990s and consistently increasing in popularity since. Over half of the snow boarders are aged 7-17 and 25% are women. One out of every eight snowboarders is between the ages of 25-44. (18-30 years are the largest group)

So what are some of the physical benefits of snowboarding?

You're out and moving, if it's falling and getting back up!

Recreational snowboarding can burn up to 630 calories/hour and competitive snowboarding, double that!

What is required physically of a snowboarder?

A high degree of strength and balance to transition from edge to edge while maintaining balance despite the changes in terrain, speed and weather conditions are necessary.

With the different types of snowboarding there are a different set of challenges.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF SNOWBOARDING

**Giant slalom** and **slalom** events are '*carving*' or "*downhill*" racing events. i.e. the snowboarder runs gates on a dual course like skiing. Longer boards and harder boots are needed for this. When carving at high speeds the boarder's body faces down the hill most of the time. A high degree of concentric, eccentric and isometric strength is needed to perform well.

**Halfpipe**, **slopestyle** and **Boardercross** events are "*free riding*" or "*all mountain*" boarding with spinning flipping, jumping and landing.

Some of the primary muscles used when snowboarding are core muscles (abdominals, back, pelvic floor), foot/ankle muscles, upper leg muscles, hip and gluteal muscles.

## Core Muscles

A great deal of balance is required when snowboarding. Core muscles (abdominals, back and pelvic floor muscles) will be working and need to be strong to maintain balance and stability. All the exercise in Pilates use these muscles in some form whether as the prime mover or as a stabilizer.

## Feet and Ankles

Your feet are connected to the snowboard. Your feet and ankle muscles are working to help you make cuts and turns so injuries to the ankles are quite common while snowboarding. Wrist fractures and sprains, shoulder injuries due to impact from falls and neck whiplash are also common when snowboarding. Increasing the strength in the tendons and ligaments of the ankles, wrists, shoulder and neck can help to minimize injury.

Pilates can help with strengthening and toning these areas. Learning to stabilize the shoulder girdle through Pilates exercises will help strengthen muscles, tendons and ligaments in these areas. Specific exercises for these areas are also available on the mat and reformer. There is plenty of reformer work for the feet, calves and ankles. Pilates is done without



Reformers



346 Richmond Road  
Suite 205  
Ottawa, ON, K2A 0E8  
613-422-3638  
lani@pilatespatio.com  
[www.pilatespatio.com](http://www.pilatespatio.com)



shoes so the muscles in the feet and ankles must work.

## Thighs

Quadriceps and hamstrings play large part in snowboarding. While they do not control your movement and direction as much as the feet and ankles the lower you are the better your balance will be. Maintaining a squatting position requires strength and muscular endurance in the quadriceps and hamstrings.

## Hip and glute muscles

These muscles are used to help you steer and carve. It is very common for people who sit all day for work or school to have tight hip flexors. Stretching out the hip flexors is very important. Overall flexibility is also important for snowboarding and injury prevention. There are a number of exercises on the reformer in Pilates that will help strengthen and increase muscular endurance in the quadriceps and hamstrings. Strengthening the glutes and hip flexors as well and stretching out the legs in all planes can be done quite well on the reformer and in particular with the feet in the straps.

Snowboarding is an asymmetrical sport. You're mounted on the board one leg in front of the other. This means you must be strong in this position but as a result muscle imbalance in the body is likely and the repetitive stress to the muscles of snowboarding can result in postural imbalances leading to injuries. Strengthening both sides of the body equally is important, not just for snowboarding but for all asymmetrical sports.

The lower body does a lot of the work in snowboarding. This doesn't mean the upper body can be neglected. Falling is inevitable. Having the strength to lift and push yourself up off the snow requires some basic upper body strength. When you aren't picking yourself up off the snow the upper body must be stable. Core strengthening and conditioning through Pilates as well as learning how to stabilize the upper body will help.

Breathing doesn't sound so hard. But efficient and controlled breathing while snowboarding may be tougher. One of the main components of Pilates is breathing, effective, efficient and controlled breathing. Through Pilates training you will learn how to breathe efficiently and controlled while being active maximizing your lung capacity and oxygenating your blood throughout your snowboarding.

While snowboarding you'll need to be able to feel the snow and terrain beneath you. Some kind of proprioceptive training will help with this. This is being able to sense the position, location, orientation and movement of the body and its parts. Pilates can offer this and in particular on the reformer which allows for more dynamic training.

Pilates can address muscular endurance for various muscle groups including the ones used for snowboarding. Unless you're a seasoned practitioner of Pilates, you probably will not be able to go through the exercises quickly enough to get your heart rate up enough to benefit cardiovascularly. Some additional cardiovascular exercise is advised.

To find out more how Pilates and Pilates Patio can help you improve your snowboarding experience this winter, please contact us at 613-422-3638 or [lanipilatespatio.com](mailto:lanipilatespatio.com)



Double leg stretch on the foam roller. Using the foam roller as a prop during matwork helps work on core stability, balance and oblique muscles.



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[www.pilatespatio.com](http://www.pilatespatio.com)

