How do you make fitness more interesting? Add water.

The Kirksville Aquatic Center widened its horizons about three years ago with the addition of a water Pilates course. The class spices up traditional Pilates postures by incorporating Pilates, a fitness regimen focused on breath awareness, spine alignment and core strengthening, said Robin Loft, the class instructor and recreation specialist.

Loft and another fitness instructor created the class as an interesting alternative to traditional Pilates, she said. The instructors originally offered water Pilates and water yoga as separate classes, but since have integrated the two.

"Some people have complained that while doing regular Pilates, it's hard on their back, and hard on their neck, and [with water Pilates] you have the support of the water," Loft said. "Also we're finding that people who could not do regular Pilates are able to do it in the water.

In addition, each individual easily can tailor the exercises to fit his or her own skill level, she said. "For example, leg rotations are a prominent aspect of Pilates, and every person can rotate to a different degree."

A multitude of different fitness levels, from the extremely fit to the complete beginner, are present each week in the class, she said.

"We have college-age students and we have senior citizens," Loft said. "We'll work with everyone who comes and get them all to the same place.

The exercises provide similar health benefits to regular Pilates, modifying traditional Pilates postures for the pool, she said. A key advantage of doing Pilates in water is the decreased body strain on participants.

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