

# Pink Pilates

If you are unlucky enough to have breast cancer – here's just one piece of luck. A new pilates studio in Ponsonby has a programme to help you regain your physical strength and one that will rebuild your self-esteem at the same time.

**LORRAINE THOMSON** pays a visit and chats to the physio who came up with the idea and who has plans to take the concept throughout the country.



Lou James

**L**ou James is a very fit physiotherapist and a compassionate one. She is taking those with breast cancer under her belt and churning out energized, confident, fit women – from a programme she runs from her Re:ab Studio called Pink Pilates.

“There is very little going on in New Zealand in the way of exercises for people with cancer,” says 30-year-old Lou, who has been researching the area. Along the way she has found the US and Europe are much further ahead.

“Last year cancer was the biggest killer of women in New Zealand and Auckland has one-third of those breast cancer incidences. New Zealand women are not as healthy as we think we are.”

Lou has found research suggesting breast cancer is linked to obesity and that exercise can actually decrease your chances of getting cancer and increase your survival if you have cancer.

“As a physio I see a lot of women in my practice and just talking with a lot of women, I realised just how high the incidence [of breast cancer]

was. Many had it themselves or had a close family member who had. I see a lot of women who have just had babies and older women and they get so much confidence from the pilates we do. So I thought it would help them a lot,” says Lou, of her Pink Pilates programme.

“The main thing I was hearing was that a lot of the medical intervention was on curing cancer and that there was nothing to help them look after their bodies or their emotional side.”

The Pink Pilates programme came about after talking to breast cancer surgeon Belinda Scott.

“She suggested that we start the programme early on in their treatment because so many suffer from depression. And there is good evidence that exercise during treatment can help ease fatigue, insomnia, nausea, anxiety, depression and pain. There is evidence that exercise can relieve these symptoms and from the women we see now, a lot of them say it is really nice to come somewhere focusing on their general well-being – something they really enjoy coming to as well as making them feel a lot better.”