



fitness

pilates

Helen Tardent, author of *Beautiful Pilates* and host of Australia's first Pilates show on *Aerobics Oz Style*, shows you in easy to follow instructions Part 1 of the Swan strengthening and extension exercise .

Swan progressions

Focus: Strengthen the muscles of your back, spine extension and abdominal stretch.

Precaution: If you feel any lower back discomfort, stop the exercise and sit back on your heels in the rest position (shown at the end of the sequence).

The Swan

Lie facedown with your forehead resting on a small cushion or rolled towel, allowing room for your nose so you can breathe freely. Place your arms in a goal-post position, with

your elbows resting on the floor slightly beneath shoulder height and your hands approximately head height, your forearms parallel to your body (picture 1).

Align your pelvis in the neutral position (hip bones and pubic bone on the same plane). Draw your navel towards your spine, narrowing your waist and lift your pelvic floor muscles to support your lower back. Gently squeeze your lower buttocks to assist in keeping your pubic bone anchored.

Breathe in to prepare. As you breathe out, push into your palms and elbows, lifting your upper back off the floor and extending your spine, taking care to extend only as far as is comfortable. Visualise the crown of your head, reaching forward as it lifts, lengthening the space between each vertebra of your spine, with your neck in line with the graceful curve of your back (picture 2).

As you breathe in, lower your upper body to the floor, maintaining a strong abdominal wall and lengthening through each vertebra of your spine.

Repetitions: Five

