

C.O.R.E CYCLING™

Creating the Optimal Ride Experience

April 2011

Bike Set Up - How To Do It, Why It's Critical

"It's just like riding a bike." Easy, nothing to it. We go to spin class, jump on a bike, drop the saddle so that "we're comfortable" and drop the hammer! The puddle of sweat under the bike is testament to a great ride. Feeling fantastic we shower, change and head down the stairs. Not so easy. Your knees hurt as you step down. You hang on to the handrail and gingerly ease into the rest of the descent. You may even have to go down sideways, or worse, one step at a time.

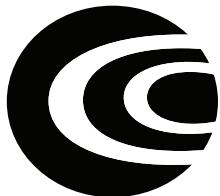
Sound familiar?

Correct bike fit, is the single most important element of a successful and injury free spin class for today and for the rest of your cycling days - which will be many - if you know how to set yourself up.

Respect The Bike

You wouldn't dream of working out on the pilates reformer without proper instruction. The reformer is a piece of equipment that comes with its own set of safety precautions. Trainer, Pino Rizzi of DCF Canada (www.dcfcanada.com), an authority on the mechanics of the pilates reformer points out one of the ways to protect the knees; *"...we have a foot bar which we are careful to adjust so the client's legs work at 90 degrees to protect their knees."*

Your spin bike isn't simply a piece of cardio equipment like a treadmill, or elliptical machine where fit isn't an issue. It's a real bike, with actual road bike *geometry* (dimensions and angles of the bike frame) so how you sit yourself on it makes a huge impact on both your comfort and more importantly your safety.



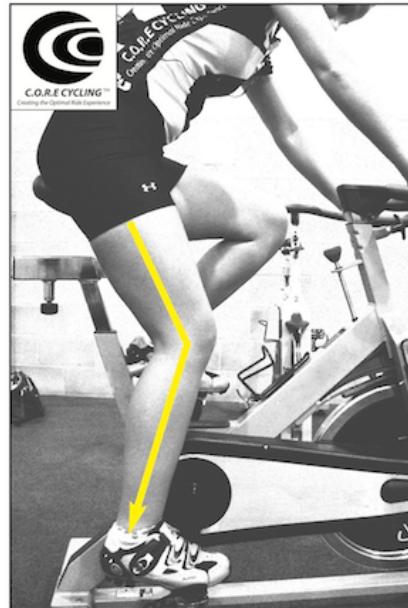
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How Do I Do It?

Saddle Height

As a *general* guideline, adjust the saddle so that it's at hip height. This is just an approximation. Sitting on the bike is where we get accurate. Rotate one pedal (flat foot) all the way down to the bottom of the pedal stroke (with hands on handlebars), you should have only about a 25 degree bend at the knee. It's not that much. If in doubt, adjust your saddle a little higher, pedal a few rotations and notice if your hips rock back and forth. If so, you're too high, drop the saddle (just a little) until the hips stabilize. Riding with a saddle that's too high will be quite uncomfortable. It may result in pain in the hip and/or lower back as well as behind the knee. If the saddle is too low, the resulting pain is in the front of the knee caused from excessive forward torque.



PROPER SADDLE HEIGHT

Slight bend in knee (approx. 20/30%)

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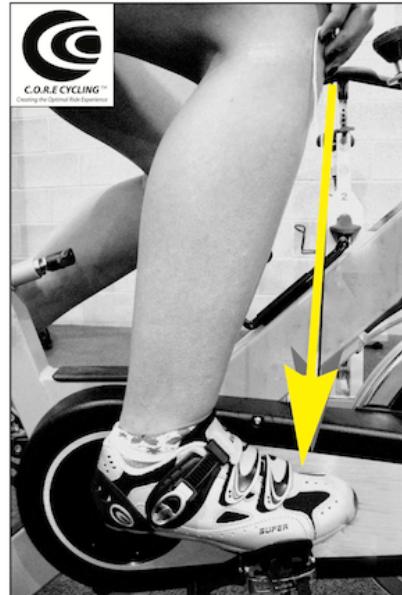
Saddle Fore/Aft

This measurement relates to how close or how far the saddle is to the handlebars.

It's all about your knee.

Rotate one pedal to 3:00 (if your full pedal stroke were a clock face), so that both crank arms are parallel to the ground. Ensure that your foot is flat. Imagine a plumb line inserted at the patellar tendon (or the small indent just below the knee cap) would fall at the pedal axle (where the pedal and the crank arm meet). If your knee is *ahead* of the pedal axle, you will exert too much pressure on the knee, again caused from excessive forward torque.

If the knee is *behind* the pedal axle, hip, lower back or behind the knee pain could result from over-reaching during the pedal rotation.



PROPER FORE/AFT

Knee over pedal axle with crank arm parallel to floor.
Plumb line from Patellar Tendon (just below knee cap) to ball of foot

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Important Note: If you've made adjustments to either saddle height or saddle fore/aft, you will need to re-check the former. In other words, by either dropping the saddle down or moving the saddle forward, you have *shortened the reach for the pedal*. Conversely by raising the saddle or moving it back, you have *lengthened the reach for the pedal*.

Handlebar Height

Handlebars should be raised until a soft bend in the elbow is achieved. This ensures that the rider isn't putting too much pressure on the trapezius. New riders or participants with back issues should have their bars raised until they are comfortable and not putting pressure on the hands. Many of the newer spin bikes have cockpits with both height and fore/aft adjustments for better upper body positioning.

Saddle Tilt

Ever feel like you're sliding forward on that saddle? Hands numb from the pressure of holding yourself up? This is a result of your saddle tilt. Most female riders will want a saddle with a *very slight* upward tilt at the nose, (too much and perineal pressure will be excruciating.) New (female) participants will feel much better on a saddle with a bit of an upward tilt. Speak to your bike mechanic about changing the angle of the nose to tilt up ever so slightly.

5,000 Rotations

Think just one class with a bad set up won't make a difference? Think again. *Each 60 minute spin class has you rotating one leg (an average of) 5,000 times!*

Respect yourself, respect the bike. Set yourself up for success.

C.O.R.E Cycling Indoor Cycling Instructor Certification

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May Issue: Common indoor cycling injuries, common causes.

Upcoming certifications: May 21,22 Toronto, May 7,8 Calgary, June 3,4 Ottawa
June (tbd) Halifax.