

# Aquatic Exercises

Performing exercises in a pool allows the buoyancy of the water to support a portion of your body weight making it easier to move in the water to improve flexibility, muscle strength, agility, balance, and cardiovascular fitness.

## Preparing for the Pool:

Before starting any pool exercise program, always check with your physical therapist or physician to make sure pool exercises are right for you. Here are some tips to get you started:

- To help provide traction on the pool floor, wear water shoes
- Water level can be waist to chest high
- To keep you afloat while exercising in deeper water, use a Styrofoam noodle or floatation belt/vest
- Slower movements in the water will provide less resistance than faster movements
- To increase resistance, use webbed water gloves, Styrofoam weights, inflated balls, or kickboards
- Do not push through any pain during exercises
- Remember to drink plenty of water while performing pool exercises

## Exercises:

1. **Water Walking or Jogging:** In chest or waist high level, take approximately 10 to 20 steps forward, then repeat walking backwards. Alternate jogging and walking every 30 seconds and continue for 5 minutes.
  - a. Increasing speed, intensity, and jogging in place will make this more challenging.
2. **Forward and Side Lunges:** Standing in front of pool wall, take an oversized lunge step in a forward direction. Make sure that the lunging knee does not past the toes. Return to the starting position and repeat with the other leg. For a side lunge, face the pool wall and take an oversized step to the side. Keep toes facing forward and repeat on the other side. Try 3 sets of 10 lunge steps.
  - a. For variation, try walking lunges forward/back and side to side.
3. **One Leg Balance:** Standing on one leg, raise your other knee as far as you can. Take a noodle and place it under your raised knee so that it forms a “U” and place your foot in the center of the U. Hold for 30 seconds and switch legs. Try 1-2 sets of 5 on each leg. Stand near a wall for support if necessary.
4. **Sidestepping:** Facing the pool wall, take sideways steps making sure your body and toes facing the wall. Take 10 to 20 steps in 1 direction and then back to where you started. Repeat twice in each direction.
5. **Hip Kickers at Pool Wall:** Standing with a pool wall on either your right or left, bring your leg forward keeping your knee straight just like if you were kicking a ball. Then kick your leg out to

the side, then move that same leg behind you. All returning to the starting position before starting a new direction. Repeat 3 sets of 10 on each leg.

6. **Pool Planks:** Holding the noodle in front of you, lean forward into a plank position. The noodle will be submerged under the water, and your elbows should be straight downward toward the pool floor. Your feet should still be on the floor. Hold as long as comfortable, 15-60 seconds depending on your core strength. Repeat 3-5 minutes.
7. **Deep water bicycle:** Going into deeper water, loop 1-2 noodles around the back of your body and rest your arms on top of the noodle for support in the water. Move your legs as if you are riding a bicycle. Perform exercise for 3-5 minutes.
8. **Arm raises:** Bend your elbows to 90 degrees, raise and lower elbows and arms toward the water surface, while the elbows remain bent to 90 degrees. Repeat for 3 sets of 10.
  - a. For added resistance use arm paddles or webbed gloves
9. **Pushups:** Stand in front of a pool wall. Place your arms shoulder width apart on the pool edge. Press your weight through your hands and raise your body about half way out of the water, keeping elbows slightly bent. Hold 3 seconds and slowly lower back into pool.
  - a. If this is too difficult try this variation
    - i. Wall push up on side of pool: place hands on edge of pool shoulder width apart, bend elbows, and lean chest toward the pool wall.)
10. **Standing knee lift:** Stand against the pool wall with both feet on the floor. Lift one knee up like you are marching in place. When your knee is even with your hip, straighten your knee. Complete 3 sets of 10 on each leg.
  - a. For more of a challenge, try this exercise without standing against the pool wall.