

fitness

Stay Cool and Stay Fit

Struggling to keep up your exercise routine in the heat? Feel like jumping in the pool instead? Here's a way to do both.

Also known as aquatics, water exercise is one of the best non-impact fitness activities around and just about anybody can participate. Pregnant women, the elderly or overweight, individuals with arthritis or those recovering from an injury can all benefit from the wide variety of aquatics classes currently available.

Get into the swim of things

Here are the facts: The buoyancy of water reduces the "weight" of a person by about 90 percent. This means that the stress on weight-bearing joints, bones and muscles is similarly reduced.

For this reason, it is unlikely that a water workout will result in injury or leave you with

Aquatics 101 – if you don't have a pool

Once you've decided to take the plunge, it's simply a matter of finding the right class for you. Check with area health clubs or the YMCA to see if they offer aquatics classes and drop in on one or two to see if they are right for your fitness level.

A good class should include a good warm up, a period of cardiovascular and muscle conditioning that gradually increases and then decreases in intensity, and a cool down. The cool down should include plenty of flexibility exercises for the entire body.

If you have a preference for music, find a class that suits your taste. Don't be afraid to ask about instructor qualifications and safety precautions. Your instructor should be certified and may also have special training in aquatic exercise.



sore muscles. That's why the pool is such a great place for people with arthritis or back problems to exercise, and for those who are new to exercise.

But don't get the idea that just because it doesn't hurt, you can't get a great workout in the pool. Water exercise can encompass all of the components of fitness: cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. And, when done regularly, water exercise can help reduce body fat.

Water works your heart

Aerobic workouts in the pool are perfect for those who find the same movements on land too jarring or painful: running, striding, kicking, leaping and even dancing.

Keep in mind that in the water, heart rate will be reduced by as much as 17 beats per minute when compared to land exercise. That's why it's so important to pay attention to how you feel. Your heart rate might indicate that your intensity is too low when you are actually exercising quite strenuously.

Water adds resistance

The resistance of water is perfect for a strength-training workout — instead of weights, the water itself provides the resistance. One of the easiest ways to create resistance in the water is to cup your hands and push or pull the water away from you.

Other devices, such as hand-held paddles and water chutes can increase the resistance to provide a more intense workout.

The flexible benefits of water

One of the greatest benefits of water exercise is its effect on flexibility. Water is a welcome environment for performing stretches that might otherwise be difficult on land.

Because the effects of gravity are lessened, you can move your joints through a wider range of motion and achieve long-term flexibility.

The pool is a fun place to feel like a kid again and get a great workout. In fact, instead of feeling out of breath or exhausted, a water class can leave you feeling surprisingly calm, yet energetic. So, even if you're a dip-your-toe-in-the-water type of person, don't be afraid to take the plunge into water fitness.

SOURCE: NIH

Area Resources:

The Sarasota YMCA has lots to offer no matter what your skill level or interest. Children and adults can learn to swim at their indoor pools in a group or through private lessons. They offer smaller, shallower instructional pools to ease newcomers into the skills like kicking, paddling and holding their breath.

Adults looking to challenge themselves without stress on their joints or those who just need a little extra help from the water can take advantage of different water exercise and therapy classes. Instructors lead small groups through water aerobics, core strengthening and much more. Mothers-to-be can also take advantage of the water through prenatal swimming classes.

Adult Swimming

They offer a variety of classes for people age 14 and up are designed for those who are T.O.W. (Terrified of Water), or for people who want to learn basic strokes and safety skills, or refine their strokes.

The classes are offered at the Frank G. Berlin, Sr. YMCA in their Amicus Center Sessions are usually 4 weeks long. Fees vary but average in the \$22 (members) to \$40 (nonmembers) range.

The YMCA also offers water exercise classes that are designed to build your strength, endurance, and flexibility all while toning your body in a low impact environment.

For more info, contact the Berlin YMCA (located at Bahia Vista and Euclid Avenue) at 941-955-8194 or the Evalyn Sadlier Jones YMCA at 941-922-9622. It's located at 8301 Potter Park Drive, Sarasota. ☎