

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR AQUATIC FITNESS TRAINING

Program Goal

To improve your overall core strength, the strength & endurance of your breathing muscles, the strength & endurance of muscles supporting your every day life and to improve your cardiovascular system with little to no impact!

Safety Precautions

Please consider all of the following before beginning or changing any exercise routine, including vertical aquatic fitness training.

- ✓ Get permission from physician and/or physical therapist before beginning – most significantly verify if there are any movements to avoid (*e.g. perhaps the leg is not to cross center line after a hip replacement*)
- ✓ Maintain proper hydration – drink water 20 minutes before class, drink water every 15 to 30 minutes of exercise and drink water after class. Overall, eight glasses per day is a only starting point; exercise, caffeine consumption and medications can all increase number of glasses needed per day. Even if one feels he/she is not “working” that hard, submersion in water triggers the kidneys to increase output by up to 60%...*most of this is water is pulled out of the blood.*
- ✓ By all means, add the social component before the start of the class or at the end of the class in the hot tub/sauna or even during a scheduled class break however while executing the moves, please be sure to focus to protect yourself and get the most out of the class.

Equipment Required

- ✓ Shoes – **No need to purchase any; just use an old clean pair from home.** Simply drill a couple holes in the bottom, right through sole AND liner, to create your own water fitness shoes. This will help prevent feet from splaying which, in turn, will help decrease leg muscle cramps – in BOTH shallow & deep water. Also, proper arch supports will help support your knees, hips and spine. Finally, non-slip soles will make the walk between the change room and the pool much safer.
- ✓ Skin-tight long-sleeve shirt – if the water is cold, wear a super-tight shirt, like a “rash guard”, over your suit to help trap body heat until your own effort can generate enough heat without it ...*likely in 3-5 classes*
- ✓ Supplement bra – even in water, breast tissue can be damaged while moving freely or under-supported. Most bathing suits are designed with horizontal swimming in mind, not vertical fitness with its’ running and jumping. Please wear the extra support needed for you!

*Information from Canadian Aquafitness Leaders Alliance:
CALA’s Instructor Training manuals, including Vertical Water Training: Kopansky
Method and CALA’s Post-Rehab & Aqua Arthritis
by Charlene Kopansky, Elizabeth Fox, Connie Jasinskis & Peggy Stirling*

- ✓ Water bottle – not only do kidneys increase output by 60% while submerged but water is needed to generate muscle action and sweat; *one does sweat in water, it is just less obvious*

Power Posture & Setting Your Core (in or out of the water)

First and foremost, one needs to focus on proper posture and “setting the core”. This takes significant concentration and consistent practice since the muscles to be activated are deep within the body, typically referred to as the “inner unit”.

In other words, in order for one to activate his/her inner unit, the essential muscles protecting the spine and the source of all movement (*e.g. Transverse Abdominus, Multifidus, “Kegels”, Internal Obliques, Quadratus Lumborum, etc.*), one must “be present” throughout the entire activity.

Unfortunately, distractions like conversations with another or by those around you can pull attention away from the task at hand. This inattention allows the inner unit to disengage and allows movement of arms & legs to continue without the proper foundation or protection. Numerous lower back injuries, painful dysfunctional hips & knees and improper body alignment can result from this inattention.

To execute proper posture & activate the inner unit:

- ✓ Lengthen the spine ...*stand tall*
- ✓ Gently draw belly button towards spine ...*suck it in*
- ✓ Squeeze “cheeks” together ...*the ones submerged*
- ✓ Focus on a level pelvis ...*headlights forward*
- ✓ Pull shoulder blades back, together and then down ...*tuck them in your back pockets*
- ✓ Stand with an open chest & a level rib cage ...*create “proud shoulders”*
- ✓ Pull top of head up towards ceiling with chin level & eyes forward ...*focus on a “wrinkle-free” neck*
- ✓ Finally, activate the Kegel muscles which form a figure 8 around the bottom of your torso ...*imagine you are trying to suck a thick milkshake through a straw with these muscles or imagine you are trying to lift the elevator up into the center of your abdomen*

Now, the trick to power posture & setting the core is not to do it once but to maintain all of these activations continuously while moving. This is where the concentration and commitment is needed. Over time, one’s body can develop various bad habits without proper posture and without the core set. Many of these bad habits produce ineffective movement patterns and injury. To break these bad habits, one needs time, effort, consistency and intense focus.

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Common mistakes while training in water

- ✓ Trying to perform movements exactly as done on land. Buoyancy works in the opposite direction of gravity so pushing water down is much harder. ...**REMEMBER, all movement focus must be reversed**
- ✓ Trying to obtain the same target heart rate in water as on land. Many feel they are not working hard enough since they are not sweating as much nor are their heart rates as high. ...**REMEMBER, cooler water reduces the need for sweating and the water target heart rate is 10% lower due to hydrostatic pressure & buoyancy however there is NO decrease in workout results**
- ✓ Using swimming motions in vertical fitness. In other words, many often use the thumbs-down position like that of horizontal breaststroke. ...**REMEMBER, keep thumbs on top while working vertically to protect wrists and arms.**
- ✓ Trying to move too small & too fast instead of slower and much larger. In water, faster is ONLY better when using LARGE motions in the water. ...**REMEMBER, slow and big first THEN try fast and big to increase intensity!**
- ✓ Assuming after one or two sessions vertical water fitness is not working. In actuality, one needs time for neurological adaptation to occur since buoyancy changes the way we “feel” our body while in water. This adaptation happens between fifth and twelfth consecutive session. ...**REMEMBER, it takes several classes to really “get it” so stick with it for at least 6 weeks in a row**
- ✓ Focusing on moving forward at all costs. If one has proper posture and balanced movements in all directions, there should be NO movement off the spot. ...**REMEMBER, good posture needs to come first and intentional movement off the spot will come later to help increase your intensity**
- ✓ Trying to work in deep water without a flotation device since “you have to work harder to stay up”. In fact, working without proper flotation actually increases injury potential due to the resulting poor posture while exercising in the deep water ...**REMEMBER, your collarbones should be supported above the water by your belt in vertical deep water fitness**

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