



The Connecting Point

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Aqua Equipment, Neurobics Offer New Tools to Fight Joint Pain

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Quick quiz: What's the most common cause of disability in the United States?

A reasonable guess is a disability widely experienced by many senior citizens. Just think about how many people have difficulty climbing a flight of stairs. You probably know the answer: Arthritis.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, arthritis or rheumatism holds the top spot for causes of disability. A 2005 study of Census data revealed that the most commonly identified limitations were difficulty climbing a flight of stairs (21.7 million), and walking three city blocks (22.5 million). Estimates for that year found that 1 in 10 adults had trouble walking a distance equal to walking through a mall.

From the CDC website: Although the word *arthritis* actually means joint inflammation, we use the term *arthritis* in the public health world to describe more than 100 rheumatic diseases and conditions that

affect joints, the tissues which surround the joint and other connective tissue. The pattern, severity and location of symptoms can vary depending on the specific form of the disease. Typically, rheumatic conditions are characterized by pain and stiffness in and around one or more joints. The symptoms can develop gradually or suddenly. Certain rheumatic conditions can also involve the immune system and various internal organs of the body.

The most common types of arthritis: Childhood Arthritis, Fibromyalgia, General Arthritis, Gout, Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Lupus.

Recently I attended the Arthritis Foundation's Aquatic Program Leader/Instructor Workshop. Many changes have occurred since the last workshop offered, including their statistics. As our population continues to grow, the foundation cites that currently 1 in 5 people have arthritis or a related condition. Children are also affected; 300,000 children have juvenile diabetes or

cystic fibrosis. In addition, 65% of people with arthritis are under the age of 65 and 60% of those affected are women. This is precisely why the content of the exercises we instruct to our classes is so essential.

The Arthritis Foundation's mission is to fund research, educate and increase awareness, which supports the group's end goal of helping those afflicted manage the disease and improve their quality of life. In 2009, the AF Aquatic Program was updated to reflect current exercise research literature and to make it easier for instructors to implement. These updates included the addition of more functional combination exercises and the use of equipment to add resistance.

The use of supportive and resistance equipment has been approved and added to the instructional class.

Supportive refers to personal floatation vest or belt for use in deep water, and can also include kickboards, noodles and noodle bars for stability and balance for use in shallow water.

Resistance equipment, such as thumb-less or fingerless gloves, must be made of light weight material; please note the use of neoprene is not approved due to the heavy drag it produces. Upper body trainers and paddles can be used to increase the surface area and add exercise intensity. These are the only types of equipment to be used - any "self," homemade or created equipment is not approved by the Arthritis Foundation.

Other program enhancements include games and neurobics, which integrate mental exercises with physical activities, along with socialization activities that can have both physical and emotional/psychological benefits. These activities can provide a distraction from pain or stress, improve body awareness, increase endurance and improve balance and coordination as well as adding an element of fun. Please keep in mind some participants will not be able or may not want to participate in these activities or games.

Allow them to stretch or perform an alternate exercise on their own, making sure that safety is a priority.

Neurobic activities should be simple and fun. For example, have your group stand in a circle and toss a beach ball while reciting the alphabet backwards or counting backwards from 100 by 3's. Use riddles and rhymes while walking forward or backwards, or ask participants to sing along or recite poetry. Challenge participants to memorize the thought of the day or learn a new word's definition each day. Have your class recall a certain fact about his or her life; once in my class, we went around the circle just stating our first real-paying job. I was amazed to learn one of my participants was a retired clown. Now I know why she always has a funny story to tell!

I emphasize to new instructors that, "Seniors are people, too!" So many times we instructors classify our senior participants by their ailments rather than understand their goals. When I walk into a new class, my first question to each person is "What do you want to get from this class and how can I make that happen for you?" Let's treat the whole person with respect. We should strive to make each person feel as if the class is a family away from home. Save the last five minutes of class to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and all the holidays. The benefits from the connection you make with your class are boundless.

The AF recommends a pool temperature between 83 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature of the water determines how long each of the following components will last. When planning a Arthritis class you will need to structure it in a way such as this: a. Warm-up, b. Flexibility, c. Muscle Strengthening, d. Endurance, e. Cool-down with option to add some Neurobics and games to focus on balance and coordination.

Some goals of your class may include: flexibility, function, balance, relaxation or socialization.

A "Must" to cue is :

- * Posture
- * stabilizing the trunk, and body mechanics
- * Breathing cues during all exercises
- * Health education/information

If you plan on offering an Arthritis class, the AF requires each Instructor to become certified, every 3 years to be renewed, by not only AF but a national recognized certification such as A-PAI .

Sources: Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program Instructor's Manual 2009

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/dsAdultDisabilityCauses/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/about.htm>



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1. What is the definition of arthritis?
2. Name 3 types of Arthritis.
3. What are the AF approved types of Supportive Equipment?
4. Why aren't neoprene type gloves approved by AF for use in an arthritis class?
5. What are some variations of hand movements that can create more intensity?
6. What is the time frame the arthritis certification is valid?
7. What are some specific goals of people looking to attend an water exercise arthritis class?
8. What are 3 ways an instructor can monitor the intensity of his or her class?
9. What is the recommended temperature the pool water should be between for an arthritis class?
10. Name in the correct order the 5 arthritis class components?

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