

Promoting the Benefits of Water Fitness– 2, 2014

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Below is an article that I wrote for a local magazine talking about the benefits of working out in the water. I feel that it is very important to constantly reinforce the benefits that your participants are receiving by being in your water fitness class. Whether it is aerobics, strength training, arthritis or a hybrid your participants should be improving their cardiovascular system, balance, and muscular strength and flexibility. If they know the benefits they can achieve your participants are more likely to work out harder. There are more benefits that I didn't mention because I didn't have space and I wanted to keep it simple and easy for people who have never been in a water fitness class. I hope you enjoy the article and can pick out all the benefits I mentioned.

The Amazing Perks of Water. Did you know that you can burn 6-8 calories a minute and get a strenuous leg and core workout playing a lively game of Marco Polo in the pool? Did you know that athletes often cross train in the pool to prevent overuse injuries? Or did you know that simply standing in the water can reduce water retention and improve your circulation? How is all that possible? It all happens because of four physical properties that water has! Those properties are buoyancy, hydrostatic pressure, viscosity, and currents.

Buoyancy is the exact opposite of gravity. Gravity is a downward force. Buoyancy is an upward force. Consequently in a vertical position you have to work harder to get your foot back down to the floor after taking a step or jogging. A constant cue we give in water aerobics is to make sure you are rolling through the foot onto the heel. When you are chest depth in the water you have lost 75% of your body weight greatly reducing the impact to your joints. Buoyancy is why you can jump higher or lift your leg higher in the water.

Every inch deeper you go in the water the pressure increases. This is known as hydrostatic pressure. This makes your body very efficient at maintaining itself! In fact your body is 30% more efficient in the water than it is out of it. Hydrostatic pressure actually assists your heart and blood vessels by pushing the blood up from your feet and legs back to your heart to be oxygenated and returned to your working muscles. It also presses excess water from your feet and ankles and lower legs at the same time.

Another water property that is particularly useful for working out is viscosity or water resistance. Water is 12-14 times the resistance of air. Simply moving through it is equivocal to having 1-2 pound weights attached all over your body. Water is like a liquid weight machine. It responds with the same amount of force you give it. If your arms and legs are floppy noodles drifting through the water you won't feel much. But if you push your arms and legs like boards forcefully through the water it is very hard. A plus of the water is it never gives you more force than you use so it is very difficult to injure yourself in the water.

The last water property we have all experienced is currents. A current is water molecules attaching to an object that is moving (you) and then attaching to each other to form a tail of water behind you. If you try to turn and move back through that tail or current of water it is very difficult for about five feet until you start forming a current behind you in the new direction you are moving. The secret to creating a current is you have to be moving. Simply walking back and forth across the pool can be a very strenuous workout for the legs and core, as well as burn approximately 8 calories a minute.

A water aerobics class utilizes all of the above water properties for a very effective cardiovascular, muscular strength and flexibility workout. Most classes are 45 to 60 minutes long and burn approximately 360 to 480 calories per class while giving a total body workout. All without getting your hair wet or putting your face in. Water aerobics is a **vertical** workout in the water.

Other benefits you can achieve are better balance and coordination. This is due to the movement of the water causing your body to constantly adjust and correct your posture and center of balance. Also if your instructor is smart she/he will have you do moves where you have to stand on one foot for an extended period of time. Coordination can be worked by moving in different planes (forward, backward, sideways, diagonally, or circularly) and combining moves such as the cross country ski and jumping jack. Flexibility is greatly improved because you can enlarge your movements due to buoyancy. You can actually touch your toes as you extend your straight leg out in front of you! You will also get a balanced muscle workout because the legs and arms are pushing against the water in every direction they are moving. Another perk is no muscle soreness after you work out. This is because of the hydrostatic pressure getting rid of that lactic acid which causes soreness. Remember hydrostatic pressure insures your muscles are getting the oxygen they need and removing the lactic acid that builds as the muscles work. The other reason you don't get sore is the warmth and movement of the water. It's like getting a Swedish massage.

Of course you also get the same health benefits working out in the water that you do in land fitness classes. Those are weight loss or maintenance, lower blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. You also improve your cardiovascular system, strengthen your muscles and bones, and improve your flexibility.

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1. What four water properties do instructors use when teaching a water fitness class?
2. What benefits do participants receive when using hydrostatic pressure?
3. Why is it important to tell participants the benefits they are receiving by working out in the water?
4. What benefits do participants receive from using the viscosity of the water?
5. Water is _____ the resistance of air.
6. What water property helps you jump higher in the water?

7. You have to travel at least ____ feet to create one of these.
8. What benefits do participants receive by using the buoyancy of the water?
9. Buoyancy is the ____ force, the exact opposite of gravity.
10. What benefits do participants receive by creating currents in the water?

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