

Information on exercises in water for Low Back Patients

Benefits

Exercises in water are helpful because of the different effects of the water.

The support of the water enables movements that could not be achieved on land.

The ease of movement through the water relaxes the muscles, decreases pain, and increases the sense of well-being.

The buoyancy and support of the water allows exercise without heavy impact on the joints.

The movement of water against the body assists the movement of the lymph and blood as gentle movements in water stimulate muscle and skin movement without stressing other body parts.

The hydrostatic pressure of the water provides resistance that strengthens muscles and improves cardiac and respiratory conditioning.

Pacing

Striking a balance between activity and rest will enable you to establish a routine of activity that builds up gradually. Find out what you can manage now and then work to improve it by initially doing slightly less and then build it up gradually by doing a bit more each time you attend the swimming pool. Plan your activity in the water and keep to your activity plan both on good and bad days.

Using the core muscles

The function of the core muscles is to provide protection and stability for the spine. Following an episode of back pain these muscles need to be retrained to provide this function. It is important to also utilize these muscles when exercising in water and when swimming.

Exercises, Walking and Swimming

Remember to maintain good posture and keep activating your core muscles during your activity.

Walking

Submerging the body up to your waist, start with gentle walking.

Just walk as you normally do on land, gently swinging your arms at your side.

Exercises can be progressed by changing the speed and direction of walking and by changing the depth of water at which the exercises are performed.

Increasing the speed increases the difficulty.
Increasing the depth increases the difficulty. You will need to use a floatation belt to walk in deep water.

To further increase the intensity of the exercise you can bring your knees up high as you walk and or increase the speed at which you swing your arms. Consider alternating between periods of walking slowly and periods of increased speed.

Changing the direction of walking enables you to strengthen different muscles. Walking forwards works the hip flexors and the thigh muscles, walking sideways tones the inner and outer thighs, whilst walking backwards works your hamstrings and buttock muscles.

Swimming

Different strokes have different effects on the spine. Swimming with the front crawl or backstroke results in less stress on the back compared with the breast stroke. Which ever is your preferred stroke correct technique is important.

When swimming it is important to use proper techniques:

Front crawl: keep the head in line with the axis along the length of the body and breathe out with your face under water.

Backstroke: to prevent neck strain ease into this stroke if you have not done this stroke for a long time.

Breaststroke: gently raise the head to take a breath and breathe out with the head in the water.

Should a stroke result in increased symptoms check your technique and use of core muscles and if symptoms remain then change your stroke.

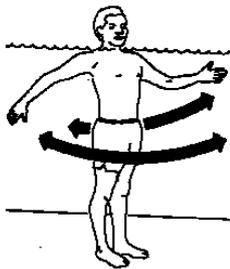
Pool Exercises

Level 1



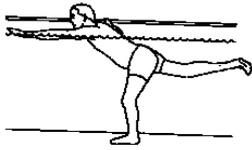
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Stand with your legs straight.
Bend alternating knees towards your stomach and clap your hands under your thigh.
Repeat 10 times.



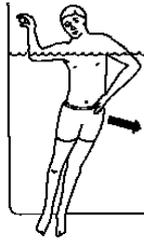
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Stand with your legs straight.
Lift one arm forwards and the other backwards. Alternate arms. Let your head follow the movement.
Repeat 10 times.



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Stand alongside the handrail bending forwards.
Lift the leg nearest the handrail up to the surface and extend the opposite arm forwards. A float may be added to assist buoyancy.
Repeat 5 times



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Stand with both feet near the wall. Hold the handrail.
Slowly lean your hips away from the wall.
Repeat 10 times