



ProAction Aquatic Physical Therapy: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Aquatic Therapy?

- Aquatic Physical Therapy is the scientific practice of physical therapy in an aquatic environment by physical therapists. It includes but is not limited to treatment, rehabilitation, prevention, health, wellness and fitness of patient populations in an aquatic environment. The unique properties of the aquatic environment enhance treatments for clients across the age span with musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular, pulmonary, and skin diseases, disorders, or conditions. There is considerable research effectively documenting the value of water therapy for many diagnoses.

Is this different from Water Exercise Class?

- Aquatic physical therapy requires the skilled service of a PT, including clinical reasoning and decision making skills, and ability to implement therapy that is in compliance with standards of care which may impact other treatment services. With aquatic therapy the patient has impairments and/or disabilities which can be minimized or eliminated and has potential to maximize functional goals/outcomes to improve quality of life and ease burden of care.

Are there any contraindications (reasons I should not participate)?

- Fever
- Open wounds (unless covered with bio-occlusive dressing)
- Uncontrolled seizure disorders
- Severe COPD /respiratory issues
- Diarrhea
- Pregnant and experiencing complications
- Chlorine Allergy

What should I expect?

- You will first participate in a “dry land” evaluation at the office. A therapist will evaluate your baseline strength, range of motion, and functional skill level and also assess your coordination, balance, and endurance. You should tell your aquatic therapist about any concerns or difficulties that you have. This is a time when your therapist works with you to formulate a customized treatment plan that includes specific short term and long term goals. Your treatment program may consist of mostly aquatic sessions, or a combination of aquatic and traditional land therapy. Your aquatic therapy will be provided one-to-one or in a small group (of two patients). Each appointment lasts approximately 45 minutes. After approximately 30 days, you will need to be re-evaluated on land in the office. Please leave enough time to change before your pool appointment to make it to your treatment session on time. Before your first visit, it is recommended you arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled therapy session.

Do I have to know how to swim?

- No, you do not have to know how to swim. Most aquatic therapy regimens do not involve actual swimming at all.

What if I am afraid of being in the water?

- Fear of the water does not need to prevent your participation in aquatic therapy! Our PTs will work closely with you to ensure your safety and comfort as you work towards your goals.

What if I don't want to put on a bathing suit?

- If you are uncomfortable wearing a swimsuit in a public area or struggle physically with dressing tasks, you may wear a clean, comfortable t-shirt and shorts for aquatic therapy. The dressing areas at both facilities are separate from the pool and other areas for your privacy. If you require assistance with walking into the facility, you should have a caregiver with you prior to and after your treatment session.

What else do I need?

- You should bring a **towel** and perhaps a cover-up or robe. You should also wear appropriate footwear on deck and in changing areas. While not required, water shoes (may be worn into the pool) are recommended as they provide improved traction, protection, and serve a hygienic purpose as well. ProAction can provide you with resources for shoes. Both facilities have showers, but you should bring your own toiletry items.

What happens when I am done with my program?

- Unless you are to grow fins and gills, we must progress to improved function on land. The typical aquatic therapy treatment period is usually between 4-8 weeks, but others may be as brief as only a few sessions. One goal of aquatic therapy is always to promote less pain and improved performance of a land-based skill that is important to the patient. Knowing that most aquatic therapy patients desire to continue a water-based exercise program, another goal is to graduate to an individualized exercise program that can be completed at a local pool. Finally, clients may wish to transition to a community based aquatic exercise class or to our own ProAction Aquafit Class, led by a licensed PT.