



## **Aquatic Physical Therapy**

### **KEY MESSAGES**

#### **AQUATIC PHYSICAL THERAPY TAKES ADVANTAGE OF WATER AND ITS PROPERTIES TO TREAT PATIENTS AND PROMOTE MUSCLE RELAXATION AND STRENGTH.**

- Aquatic therapy uses hydrostatic pressure, which reduces swelling and sensitivity to touch, assists with breathing out and helps to strengthen respiratory muscles.
- Aquatic physical therapy is used to treat cardiopulmonary, neuromuscular and musculoskeletal impairments and includes an individualized treatment plan with measurable goals and functional outcomes.
- Water treatment with a physical therapist can decrease muscle spasms and promote relaxation for neurological conditions as well as decrease pain for those with arthritic joints, healing fractures and chronic pain conditions.
- Aquatic treatment can increase range-of-motion especially for pre-natal mothers, post-surgical patients and individuals with orthopedic injuries and back pain. It also can improve muscular strength and cardiovascular conditioning.
- Buoyancy is the upward force that keeps things afloat in water.
  - ✓ With the decreased effects of gravity, buoyancy provides relief between joint bones, lessens pain and facilitates movements that are difficult on land.
  - ✓ Buoyancy reduces the fear of falling and promotes increased circulation, coordination and balance by providing increased reaction time.

#### **AQUATIC EXERCISE PROGRAMS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE THREE MOVEMENTS AFFECTED BY BUOYANCY.**

- “Buoyancy-assisted” exercises involve movements toward the surface of the water that are helped by the buoyant properties of water.
- Movements directed downward result in “buoyancy-resisted” exercises that oppose the buoyant nature of water.
- Exercises performed parallel to the bottom of the pool are classified as “buoyancy supported” since movements are supported by the water.

#### **EFFECTIVE AQUATIC PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES RELY ON MULTIPLE TECHNIQUES.**

- Traditional activities, similar to those performed on land, focus on applying the special properties of water to therapeutic exercise, gait/balance training, cardiovascular exercise, flexibility training and functional mobility training.
- The Halliwick technique, originally developed for disabled children, combines knowledge from fluid mechanics, psychology and sociology to therapeutically treat patients.
- Bad Ragaz facilitates muscle re-education, strengthening, spinal traction and elongation and inhibition of stiff or rigid muscles. It usually is performed in a horizontal position with supports for floatation.
- Watsu® is a wellness technique or massage incorporating shiatsu and focusing on stretching.