

An Alternative Type of Physical Therapy

Aquatic physical therapy is physical therapy performed in a pool setting that utilizes the properties of water to promote healing and recovery. It is a great addition to traditional “land-based” therapy and can help therapists and patients achieve optimal outcomes during rehabilitation.

“For patients with arthritis, sports injuries, pre- and post-surgical, joint replacements, connective tissue disorders, balance impairments, neurological disorders, chronic pain, deconditioning, weakness, fibromyalgia, and orthopedic injuries it is a useful treatment option,” explains Christopher Urato, PT, DPT, at Nashoba Sports and Physical Therapy. “Overall benefits may include improvements in range of motion, flexibility, strength, balance, endurance and gait.”

There are several components of water that make aquatic physical therapy very advantageous to rehabilitation patients, including the following properties:

Buoyancy. By definition, buoyancy is the tendency of a body to float or to rise when submerged in a fluid, which decreases the effects of gravity, creating a “weightless” feeling for the patient. This property supports the body and decreases the stress placed on joints, allowing for increased ease of movement, safety, and comfort. As a result, patients who have weight-bearing or physical restrictions are able to perform certain exercises in the water at an earlier rate than on land.

Hydrostatic Pressure. This is the pressure exerted or transmitted by a fluid (i.e. water) at rest at a given depth. It increases in proportion to the depth measured from the surface. This characteristic helps prevent blood from pooling in areas of the body, which in turn can reduce swelling. It can also help to stabilize joints, which is beneficial for patients who have muscle weakness and/or decreased balance.

Resistance. Water provides a resistive force due to the bond between water molecules. Therefore, performing exercises in water helps build strength as muscles need to work to break through the bonds and move through water. The amount of resistance can be changed during treatment depending on the type of movement and equipment used. Physical therapists also utilize equipment such as paddles, kickboards, gloves, fins, weights, floats, and dumbbells to help make an exercise more comfortable or more challenging based upon the goal of the exercise.

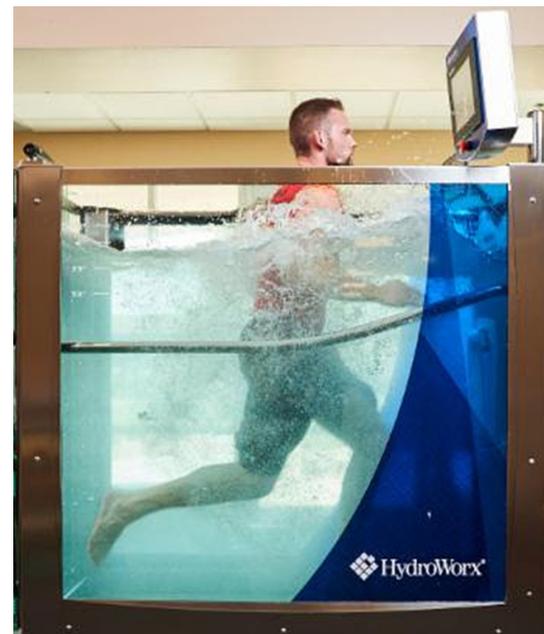
Temperature. The neutral warmth of the pool helps relax patients’ muscles, which can decrease a patient’s pain level. It also helps to reduce muscle spasms and spasticity.

“Many patients feel that aquatic therapy is a great treatment option during their recovery as it allows them to perform exercises more comfortably, accelerating their progress towards their goals for therapy,” says Urato. “Plus, they find that it’s fun!”



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Aquatic Physical Therapy at Nashoba Sports and Physical Therapy

Nashoba Sports and Physical Therapy offers aquatic physical therapy in our state-of-the-art **Hydro-Worx 300 Pool with Treadmill**. Our team of sports and physical rehabilitation specialists evaluate each patient and determine whether aquatic therapy will be a part of their plan of care. The aquatic therapists then create an exercise program that is specifically tailored to each individual based upon their evaluation and physical impairments. Typically, patients will receive a combination of aquatic and land-based treatments, allowing the patient to obtain the benefits from both types of therapy during their recovery.

For more information about aquatic physical therapy, please call Nashoba Sports and Physical Therapy at 978-784-9910