



Exercise in Water

CHALLENGE

Swim or do water exercises 3 days a week this month.

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Exercise in Water,” “Jump In!” and “Safety.”
2. Three days each week, exercise in water – swim, do aerobics, or jog in place. Water exercise is easy on the joints and suitable for everyone. But it can be as challenging as you want to make it.
3. To complete the Challenge, you must exercise in water at least 12 days this month. Use your monthly Health Challenge™ Calendar to keep track.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Exercise in Water

Children and adults alike enjoy being in the water for exercise and fun. It is an excellent fitness choice for just about everyone – young or old, fit or not fit, pregnant women, paraplegics, and people recovering from sports injuries.

You can swim, do water aerobics, or play water polo. If you can't swim laps, you can “jog” from one end to the other in a shallow pool. You can exercise anywhere there's deep enough water – in a pool, in the ocean, or in a lake.

Water exercise is a gentle way to exercise joints and muscles, making it ideal for people with arthritis or other joint problems. The further you immerse yourself, the more buoyancy you experience. When submerged to the waist, your body bears half its weight; when you're in water up to your chest, you're supporting about a quarter of your weight. Water also provides greater resistance than simply exercising “on land,” so you're building muscle strength.

Water exercise improves:

- Cardiovascular fitness
- Blood pressure
- Upper and lower muscle strength
- Cholesterol levels
- Energy levels
- Stamina
- Mental outlook

Exercising in water helps reduce sore muscles and injury. And, it helps you burn excess calories.

Swimming

Many people enjoy lap swimming and consider it the best way to build cardiovascular endurance and strength without jarring their joints. You'll get in shape faster by swimming fewer minutes more often, rather than jumping in once a week for an hour. Try to swim for 20 minutes on at least 3 days a week.

When you're swimming laps, you have to get your face in the water. Good swimming goggles are essential to help you see where you're going. Look for comfortable-fitting goggles that don't leak.

It's also best to wear a suit designed for competitive swimming. They're more comfortable and are designed to reduce drag.

It takes lots of practice to be able to swim well. If it's been a few years since you learned to swim the butterfly or crawl, you might want to take a refresher course. You could also ask someone to help you improve your technique or learn a new stroke, such as a friend or coworker who used to swim competitively. You could also hire a coach.

A great – yet somewhat painful – way to tell if you have good technique is to have someone videotape you swimming laps. As you review it, your coach or training buddy can point out improvement opportunities in your form.

Challenge yourself to improve your speed and fitness. If you usually swim a half mile, break the laps into a series of sprints, followed by brief rests. For example, swim 5 lengths as fast as you can, rest for 15 seconds, and swim 5 more lengths. You can also swim a lap quickly, and then swim a more leisurely lap, continuing to alternate fast laps with easy laps.

Above all, have fun! Break out some swim fins and kickboards. Have a “friendly race” with your training buddy. Plan a vacation to a warm spot and swim in the ocean.



Water aerobics

Increasing numbers of people are discovering water aerobics. Even if you can't swim, you can get a full aerobic workout and strength and flexibility training while at the same time keeping cool and pampering your joints.

No matter what you're doing in water, you're constantly working your muscles to keep your balance – but you're not necessarily thinking about it. Some people say water aerobics seems easier than exercising on land. Water's buoyancy and constant resistance offer many advantages, including perpetual balance-training – all while reducing the strain on joints.

Many of the same exercises you do on land can be done in the water. The only equipment you need is a swimsuit. Water shoes can provide traction and protection from rough pool surfaces.

Check with your local community pool, YMCA, health club, or hospital to see if they offer a water aerobics class. Actively exercising in water for 30 minutes gives you the same benefits of walking 2 miles in 30 minutes.

You can also exercise on your own in your local pool. Start in shallow water – somewhere close to your waist. Walk or jog in place, jog laps, do jumping jacks, practice cross-country skiing moves, do knee lifts, or see how high you can jump. Add resistance – such as aquablocks – to your arms and legs for a better workout.

Once you become accustomed to exercising in shallow water, increase the depth to somewhere between your rib cage and underarms. You might also want to try deep water exercise using a life vest.

Jump In!

There's almost no limit to the kinds of exercises you can do in water. Across the nation, facilities with pools are offering water exercise versions of traditional land exercises:

- Water yoga
- Water Pilates
- Water kickboxing
- High-intensity body sculpting
- Deep-water interval training
- Aerobics for pregnant women

If you're interested in group sports, there's water basketball, water volleyball, water polo, and "Marco Polo" (the water version of hide and seek). Even on-water sports such as kayaking, surfing, and boogie boarding can give you a good workout.

Read a step-by-step guide to performing water aerobics for lower body strength: www.ehow.com/how/5229_perform-water-aerobics.html

Safety

Good swimming skills are never a replacement for proper supervision by a lifeguard or a swimming buddy. People drown for many reasons, not only because they can't swim. Factors that can contribute to drowning include a medical emergency, injury, hyperventilation that causes blackout, overexertion, hypothermia (water is too cold), and cramps.

Read water safety tips from the American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/healthtips/safetywater.html>.

Try These Swim Strokes

Swim the Crawl

The crawl is a great all-around stroke.

- Keep your head pointed in the direction you want to go.
- Kick from your hips – not your knees.
- Trace an "S" pattern with your hands through the water with each stroke.
- Roll slightly from side to side as you take each stroke. Stretch out your body with each stroke.
- Breathe on alternate sides. Slowly exhale through your nose over 3 strokes.

Swim the Backstroke

The backstroke helps develop strong legs.

- Float on your back, nose pointed toward the ceiling.
- Kick your legs from the hips (not your knees). Keep your legs fairly straight (not rigid) and your toes pointed slightly to the sides. Your splash should be minimal.
- Rotate your arms in a windmill-like motion. One arm should be at your side while the other is above your head.



- Bend your arms slightly, with hands cupped.
- Your hands should enter the water above your head, pinky first.

See animated swimming techniques from BBC Sport for these and other swimming styles:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/other_sports/swimming/4227472.stm





Exercise In Water

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record each day you exercise in water.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you exercised in water. You must meet this goal at least 3 times a week or 12 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of good health.
4. Turn in your Health Challenge™ form if requested, or enter your completion of this Challenge on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

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MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
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_____ Number of days this month I exercised in water

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

