

A Water Workout Program

Exercising in a pool can give your muscles a burn not even water can cool off!

Water is one of the best resistance mediums around, providing all the benefits of a gym and running track without the same risk of injury. You can train both your muscles and cardiovascular systems at high intensity without pounding your joints, tendons and ligaments. Incorporate water exercise into your training.

THE FULL BODY WORKOUT

Depending on how many reps and sets you do, this routine can take 20 minutes or longer. It replicates a high-rep, low-weight resistance workout, and if performed vigorously should take care of your cardiovascular needs as well. Add some water running if you want to extend your workout. Take to the pool three to five times a week, and your body will be in the swim.

Perform this routine in a sequence in chest-deep water. A warm-up isn't really necessary, since the water resistance slows your movements enough to make the risk of injury minimal. For sets and repetitions, follow these guidelines:

- * If you have been doing aerobic activities two to three days a week for four months or longer, start with one set of 20 reps of each exercise. Add reps up to 30, then move on.
- * If you have been doing aerobic and anaerobic exercise three to four times a week for six months or longer, do one set of 30 reps of each exercise and progress to two sets of 20 reps.

You can always just run in the water, but to get the most benefit from it try anaerobic interval training; those all-out bursts of speed increase the body's ability to transport and use oxygen. Although intervals are primarily used by competitive athletes, they are also a way to create a workout that features high intensity and variety.

For runners, intervals are characterized by an intense, staccato pounding of the feet and legs, and a corresponding jerking of the joints and limbs. All of that is minimized in the water. It also lets cyclists or other athletes who have suffered an injury still get their anaerobic fix.

Lift your knees until they are bent 90 degrees on each stride, and pull your arms directly forward and back, with no lateral movement. Be sure the opposite arm and leg work together. Once you have mastered good form, increase your leg speed. If you lose form, slow down, then try to increase speed again. Try this interval session:

- * 15-second sprint, 15-second jog;
- * 30-second sprint, 30-second jog;

*45-second run, 45 second jog;

* one-minute run, sprinting the last 15 seconds, one-minute jog.

1. LUNGE: In water up to your neck take a forward stride position with your right knee bent, right foot in front. Your left arm is forward for counterbalance. Jump up and switch arm and leg positions so the left leg and right arm are forward. Opposition is the key to this exercise, so make sure your right arm moves with your left leg and vice versa. Emphasis: quadriceps, hip flexors, gluteus maximus, hamstrings, deltoids, pectorals, latissimus dorsi.

2. SIDE-STRADDLE JUMP: Skip this exercise if you have lower-back problems. Begin bounding on both feet, legs together. Jump up, spread your legs apart, then pull them back together before landing. Bend your knees as you land, then immediately start the next straddle jump Emphasis: quads, hip adductors and abductors, glutes and hamstrings.

3. UP/DOWN PULL: Stand with your legs apart and both arms straight out to your sides, palms facing down. Pull your arms down until your hands touch in front of your hips. Then, without changing your hand position, lift your arms back to the starting position. Emphasis: pecs, lats, traps, delts, various upper-back muscles.

4. ARM CURL: Stand with your legs apart and both arms straight out to your sides, similar to the previous exercise, but with palms facing forward. Then forcefully pull your forearms in while keeping your upper arms in a stationary position. Next reverse the motion with vigorous outward thrusts, leading with the back of your hands. Pay attention to balance; if it's a problem, pack up to the side of /the pool to perform the exercise. Emphasis: biceps, triceps, wrist flexors and extensors.

5. POWER FROG JUMP: Bounce on both feet with your legs together and your arms to your sides for stability. Jump and lift both knees toward your chest. At the same time, sweep both hands forward to meet in front of you. As your feet return to the pool bottom, swing your arms back to their starting position. Emphasis: quads, hip flexors, glutes, hamstrings, pecs, biceps, triceps, delts, various upper-back muscles.

6. BICYCLING: So you don't overemphasize the quads, do at least a few minutes of this hamstring-intensive exercise for balance. Sit on a step or brace yourself at the side of the pool. Bend one knee, then the other as you kick in a bicycling movement. Lift each knee as close to your chest as possible and raise each foot out of the water. Emphasis: hamstrings, glutes, quads, hip flexors, hip adductors.

7. FRONT/BACK PULL: Stand with one foot forward for stability, arms stretched out to your sides, fingers together, palms facing forward. Pull your arms through the water to meet in front of you. Without changing your hand position, forcefully push your arms back to the starting position. Emphasis: pecs, trapezius, delts, various upper-back muscles.

POST-WORKOUT STRETCHES:

QUADS: Face the pool edge and place your left hand on the deck for balance. Grasp your right ankle with your right hand and pull your right heel up toward your right buttock. Keep your hips level and knees side by side. Maintain steady pressure while you breathe slowly and deeply five times. Place your right hand on the deck and repeat the exercise for the left leg.

HAMSTRINGS, GLUTES, CALVES, SPINAL ERECTORS, TRAPS: Lift your left foot straight in front of you onto the wall of the pool until you feel a challenging stretch. The more flexible you are, the higher your foot will be on the pool wall. Relax your shoulders, back and neck. Breathe slowly and deeply five times, Each time you exhale, try to relax more and gradually straighten the knee. If your knee is straight, try to get your heel flat on the wall as well. Repeat with your right leg.