

FITNESS HANDOUT

BY MARY CURRY

Kimberly A. Searl
www.mindbodybalance.com
 By Appointment Only

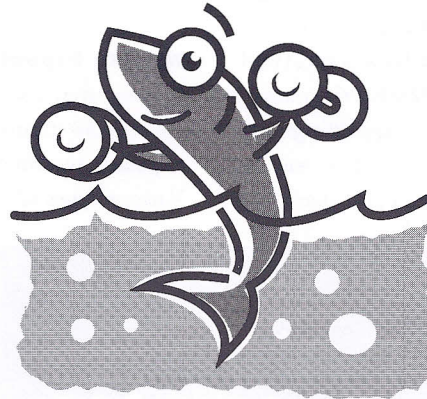
Phone: 734 - 241 - 7457

Fax: 734 - 241 - 7457

kim@mindbodybalance.com

Water Fitness 101

Looking for some variety in your workouts? Weary of the bouncing and jarring of joints from impact exercise? Then consider a water fitness class. Water workouts can benefit exercise newcomers and advanced athletes alike. Water training can enhance your daily activities, such as walking or lifting groceries, because it builds functional strength and endurance. Water also provides a more private workout than land because your body is mostly covered by the water.



creating a floating feeling. Because of buoyancy, your body gets an immediate rest after you stop moving. A body weighs about 90 percent less when submerged than it does out of water.

Water also creates **resistance**, because your body acts as liquid weight in every direction you move. Movement underwater can create 12 to 15 times more resistance than movement on land. In addition, water currents make changing directions and starting or stopping movements more challenging.

Before You Take the Plunge

Here are some tips to increase your success when you exercise in the water:

Choose a Pool That Meets Your Needs. When looking into a water program, check out the pool involved. Ask about the water temperature, which ideally should hover between 82 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit (28–30°C). A good neutral temperature—at which your body can balance heat production and heat loss during a vigorous workout—is 84°F.

Consider water depth as well. If you are a nonswimmer, you might feel more comfortable in a shallow-water class. Deep water is best if you're rehabilitating from injury or want a nonimpact activity.

Talk to Your Instructor. Before you start a class, introduce yourself to the instructor. Let him or her know this is your first time; if you're afraid of the water, mention that. Point out any health or biomechanical problems and ask the instructor to provide exercise modifications if needed. Make sure he or she teaches you personal safety skills in the water.

Wear Proper Water Attire. You'll need a swimsuit that fits you well. You might consider thermal vests or leggings, especially if your class is outdoors or the pool temperature is cooler than you'd like. Water shoes are a good investment because they provide traction on slippery locker-room floors and protect feet from injury on pool bottoms, which can be rough. Webbed gloves help with balance and stability, and can increase workout intensity. Don't forget a plastic bag to carry your wet items home.

Also bring a water bottle, because you actually sweat a great deal in the water. Drink before, during and after the workout, just as you would if you were exercising on land.

Properties of Water

Buoyancy is the water property that pushes your body upward,

Making the Most of the Water

To enhance your class experience, try these suggestions:

Get Comfortable in the Pool. When you first enter the pool, continuously move your legs to stay warm. Next find a comfortable water depth in which you can control your movements and not feel like you're floating away. In a shallow-water program, the water should hit somewhere between navel and nipple. The shallower the water, the more impact there is on your body.

Practice Proper Body Alignment. Proper body alignment is important for safety and effectiveness in the water. Stand tall with your chest out and shoulders retracted and pressed down. Place your chin in a neutral position, not sticking out or in. Contract your abdominals to enhance a neutral-spine position. Because water will continuously challenge your alignment, pay careful attention and adjust when needed. Use your stabilizers—trunk and hands—to balance your body in the water.

Work With the Water's Resistance. If you're used to doing most of your cardiovascular exercise on land, adapting to working against the water's resistance may take some time. Once you feel comfortable with the moves and *want* to increase intensity, simply enlarge the size of your movement or increase the speed.

Monitor and Regulate Yourself. Be in charge of your workout pace. Listen to your body. You should be warm in the face and able to speak a short sentence without feeling breathless. Regulate intensity by changing pace, altering the size of moves or substituting different movements. ■

Mary Curry is a YMCA faculty trainer and an instructor for the YMCAs in St. Paul, Minnesota. She is an IDEA presenter and a member of the IDEA water fitness advisory committee.

This handout is a service of IDEA, the international association of fitness professionals, the leading organization serving personal trainers, exercise instructors and business operators.

