

Fun Fact of the Week

Ready to Get in on the Aquatic Fitness Movement?*

[By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

Swimming pools aren't just for laps anymore. Popular water workouts build strength and flexibility — in fun classes or on your own.

Welcome to the swimming pool, the great equalizer, a place where people of all ages and abilities can get a fun workout — and we're not just talking swimming laps. Swimmers and nonswimmers alike are heading to the pool for exercise that ranges from gentle aerobics to heart-pounding boot camp workouts.



The health and wellness experts from the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program recommend using the pool to explore both aerobics and resistance training. You'll quickly discover these two pool-centric secrets.

1. Water is more resistant than air

Water is significantly denser than air — by almost 800 times. That means you can build muscle strength as you move through water. One study found that a long-term water exercise program was actually more effective than working out on land to build muscle strength.

2. Water buoyancy protects your joints and provides support

Water workouts are popular with all age groups. They're especially helpful for anyone recovering from surgery or an injury. The pool offers a safe spot to keep moving — just pick your favorite aerobic activity, or join a class. Heated pools are a plus: They'll help warm up your joints and muscles quickly.

People with chronic illnesses and those with joint problems may really benefit from time in the pool, too. Research has shown that joint-friendly aquatic exercise can improve physical functioning in adults over 50.

Common water aerobic exercises include:

- **Running or jogging.** Great for cardiovascular fitness, as well as easing back into a running program after an injury.
- **Water walking.** Typically done in waist-deep water, swinging your arms at your sides just as you do when you walk on land.
- **Aerobics classes.** Offer a mix of exercises such as leg lifts, kickboarding, lunges and jumping jacks.

Water workout gear

Aerobic water classes usually include basic pool gear. Your local pool may also provide major equipment like water treadmills, bikes and elliptical machines. You can also buy gear to help amp up the effectiveness of your time in the pool.

- **Foam dumbbells.** Lightweight and easy to transport — but plenty heavy when you're lifting them under water — the dumbbells come in a variety of resistance options.
- **Water weights.** Strap-on ankle or wrist weights increase the resistance to arm or leg movements in the pool. Also available in a range of resistance options.
- **Kickboard.** You'll quickly learn lots of kickboard drills once you have one of these inexpensive, lightweight pool tools. Some pools even offer team sports like board ball — think baseball, but your kickboard fills in as the bat.
- **Hand paddles and resistance gloves.** The marketplace is flush with options here. This gear is designed to help improve your strength training in the water.
- **Buoyancy belt.** These belts help keep your head above water in the deep end while leaving your hands free. You can run, lift weights and do other workouts using your hands, without needing to tread water.

Want to mix it up? Mayo Clinic's health and wellness experts also endorse an approach that splits your time in and out of the pool. For instance, warm up in the pool with some deep water jogging, then jump out of the water to do pushups, planks or lunges on your towel poolside. Next, dive back into the water for some kickboarding, weightlifting and more jogging.

The more you explore water workouts, the sooner you'll zero in on your favorite activities. Whatever your choice, the research says you'll reap health benefits that can include added strength and flexibility, improved cardio fitness, and even weight loss. Maybe it's time to join the aqua fitness movement?

* <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/ready-to-get-in-on-the-aquatic-fitness-movement/art-20390059>