

POOL Workouts

This summer, work on your cardio, toning and stretching in the pool

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If you've ever been injured, you know how painful and limiting movement can be. I was recently diagnosed with a partially torn supraspinatus, one of four muscles that make up the rotator cuff. For years I had been accustomed to doing push-ups, dumbbell chest presses and a variety of other upper body exercises that involved my shoulder. I have since had to significantly alter my workouts while my body takes time to heal, and with the hot summer days ahead, I've decided to take my training to the pool and encourage you to do the same.

The wonderful thing about water is that it gives you natural resistance with absolutely no impact to the joints, which can benefit people of all fitness levels. For those with severe arthritis or other joint mobility problems, the pool offers the perfect alternative to lifting weights in the gym. For seasoned athletes looking for ways to improve performance, aquatic plyometric training, or jumping in the water, is an effective way to increase power and vertical reach, and a great

way to get your heart rate up. Aquatic plyometric exercise provides the same performance-enhancement benefits as plyometric exercise does on land, but with significantly less muscle soreness, reduced impact and decreased risk of injury. In fact, the pool might be the only place where you can get cardiovascular exercise, muscle toning and stretching without feeling like you've even broken a sweat.

If you want to enjoy an outdoor summer workout without that sweaty, sticky feeling, check out the comprehensive pool program below. This circuit-style workout alternates between toning exercises and plyometric exercises and ends with gentle stretching. It will challenge you whether you are a new or seasoned exerciser. All you need is your bathing suit, a foam noodle and a watch.

Before you get started, make sure the water level of the pool is somewhere in the chest/armpit area of your body, and that the water temperature does not exceed 30°C or 86°F. Wear aquatic shoes to prevent slipping and increase the effectiveness of your jumps.

After

five to 10 minutes of brisk water walking, perform the following exercises for one minute each, quickly moving between exercises. Begin with one set all the way through, and work your way up to three sets, with a break for one minute in between sets. Finish by water walking for five minutes to cool down. The total time of this program should take 25 to 45 minutes.

1 Start with feet together. Jump, split your legs and land with your feet closed. The split can be to the side or front/back combination.

2 Squats: Stand with your feet spaced hip-width apart and toes facing forward. Extend both arms out in front of you, with your hands resting on a noodle. Engage your abdominals to stabilize your core. Keep your feet flat on the bottom of the pool as you begin bending your knees while simultaneously flexing at your hips to lower your body into a squat. Pause when your thighs are parallel to the bottom of the pool. Return to the starting position.

3 Start with feet apart. Jump, double or triple cross, and land with feet open.

4 Single leg pump: Hold the noodle in a "U" shape and submerge it. Raise a bent leg up and put the arch of your foot on the bottom of the "U," as if it is a stirrup. Release your hands. Your hip and knee are bent at a 90-degree angle, with your foot depressing the "U" of the noodle. Push, or pump, the noodle down and up for 30 seconds per leg.

5 Start with feet together. Perform jumping jacks three times, and then jump and turn 360 degrees.

6 Arms: Hold the noodle in an upside down "U," like holding ski poles. Submerge only the part of the noodle that is in your hands. Alternately push and pull your hands through the water. Keep the noodle in the upside-down position. Bend your arms to a 90-degree angle at the elbow. Press the insides of your elbows into your sides.

7 Start with feet together. Jump side to side, increasing intensity by lifting the knees and driving the feet down for jumps.

8 Abdominal exercises: Hold the noodle like a "U" in each hand, like you would a swing at the park, and sit on it. Take your feet off the bottom of the pool. Swing on the noodle by moving

your lower legs forward and backward. Advance to sit-ups. Allow the noodle to slide out from under your bottom and up your back, under your armpits. Float your body up to the surface. Bring your knees and chest toward each other as in a sit-up.

9 Start with feet together. Jump and raise both knees to the front, landing with feet together.

10 You can modify Pilates exercises that work your arms for use in water. An example is the 50:50. This standing Pilates exercise targets your triceps and shoulders to tone your arms. It also works your abs, lower back, chest, back, inner thighs, outer thighs and hamstrings. To perform a 50:50, stand in the pool submerged to your chest with your arms straight at your sides, palms facing backward. Extend your right leg straight backward and point your toes so they are approximately six to 12 inches from the pool bottom. Balance on your left leg and pump your arms forward and backward quickly for 30 seconds. Move your arms only a few inches and keep them straight. Switch legs.

11 All-body stretch known as the "Superman": Stand facing the side of the pool. Place your hands onto the ledge, palms down. Make certain that you stand with your legs shoulder-length apart and your body outstretched in the water. Your body is supported by the water. Feel your leg muscles stretch. This exercise stretches all regions and joints of your back and shoulders. Hold in this outstretched position for as long as comfortable. Return to the upright position by closing your legs and bringing your arms to your sides. Repeat this exercise five times. 

