



## Exercising in Water with persistent pain

Exercising in water provides a way of enjoying a low-impact yet high-benefit workout. Being in water can help support up to 90% of our body's weight, due to the effect of buoyancy, and this can help with managing pain levels whilst engaging in exercise.

Here are some of the proposed benefits of exercising in water:

- **Improved Flexibility:** The water's buoyancy supports the body and reduces the strain on joints, allowing for a greater range of motion and flexibility.
- **Decreased weight bearing:** Buoyancy supports up to 90% of our body weight, which means less stress on painful joints and muscles. This relief allows for more comfortable movement and exercise.
- **Reduced Inflammation:** Water exercises can help reduce inflammation in the body. The hydrostatic pressure exerted by water promotes circulation and can manage/decrease swelling.
- **Increased Strength:** Water provides natural resistance, which helps to build muscle strength without the need for heavy weights. This resistance training can improve overall muscle tone and endurance, assisting in pain relief and functional mobility.
- **Temperature Regulation:** Warm water can soothe tense muscles, improve the movement of fluid within the body's joints and promote relaxation. Cooler water (including wild swimming) can reduce inflammation and numb painful areas.
- **Psychological Benefits:** Exercising in water can also have psychological benefits. The soothing environment and the ability to move without pain can significantly improve mental well-being and reduce anxiety related to chronic pain conditions.

### What should I think about if I am considering water-based exercise?

**Entry into the water** – If you are considering attending a swimming pool, visit first to check entry method. Some pools have ladders, others have stepped access.

**Temperature** – Consider the temperature of the water and surrounding environment, if you are unsure how your body might respond to temperature change do a brief trial on your first visit to the pool. Enquire with local pools as to the temperature of their water, even a 1-degree difference can make a difference.

**What is your goal?** – Exercising on dry land or in the water can offer many results, consider what you are doing it for and then plan what you are going to do. Swimming is a great form of exercise but is not the only form of exercise one can do in a pool. The following sheets provide some suggestions of exercises that can help to progress towards different physical goals, all of which can be carried out in a 'pain management consistent' way.



**Warm Up** - even when exercising in water it is a good idea to allow yourself a warm-up

- Walk slowly forwards around the pool.
- Walk sideways leading with one leg going out to the side, and then the opposite (crab walking)
- Walk backwards – check regularly for obstacles in the water.
- Walk forwards, and swiftly change direction to walk against the current
- Walk with high step overs.
- Gently jog through the water
- Relax onto a woggle and spend a few minutes getting used to the buoyancy.

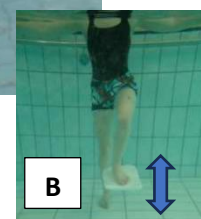
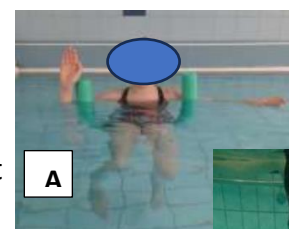
### Balance and core

**A.** Sit on a woggle with it sideways under thighs.

Once balanced start slowly lifting one thumb/hand out of the water.

Feel the body trying to rotate and resist it, or use opposing thumb out of water to regain equilibrium.

Now try to maintain your balance whilst turning your head.



**B.** Place a flat float under one foot, lift foot up and down keeping the float under your foot.

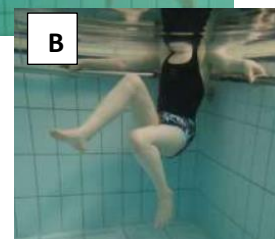
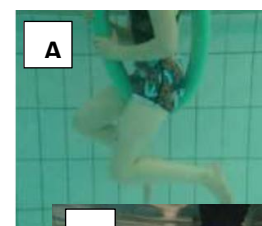
### Cardiovascular

- Cycling

**A.** Slide woggle between legs so you can hold one end of woggle in front of you. Lift your legs off the floor and cycle. In the same position try sculling with your arms.

**B.** Perch yourself into the corner of the pool, lift your legs and start cycling.

- Perform the 'rocking horse': - hop from front to back leg whilst sweeping arms in front and to the sides.



### Upper body mobility

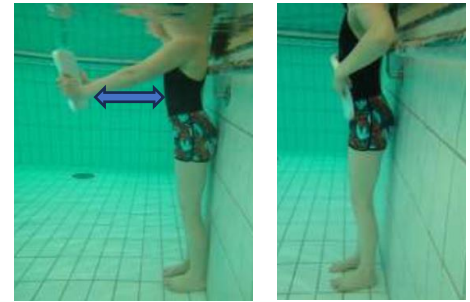
Stand with feet hip width apart - floats in each hand or resting under your forearms.

- Turn at your waist rotate both floats on the surface from left to right.
- With floats on the surface, open arms up wide then take one arm across your body to the other arm. Repeat to both sides.
- Keep elbows into your sides, and bent to 90 degrees, step around on the spot, allowing the water to rotate your arms from the shoulder.



## Upper body (and core) strengthening

- Hold the float horizontally in front of your body and push the float down, then let the float rise back up slowly with control. The closer to the body the float is, the easier this will be.
- Hold a float vertically with both hands and push and pull the float away from and towards your tummy. The faster you make this movement the greater the challenge to your core muscles.



## Lower body strengthening / mobility

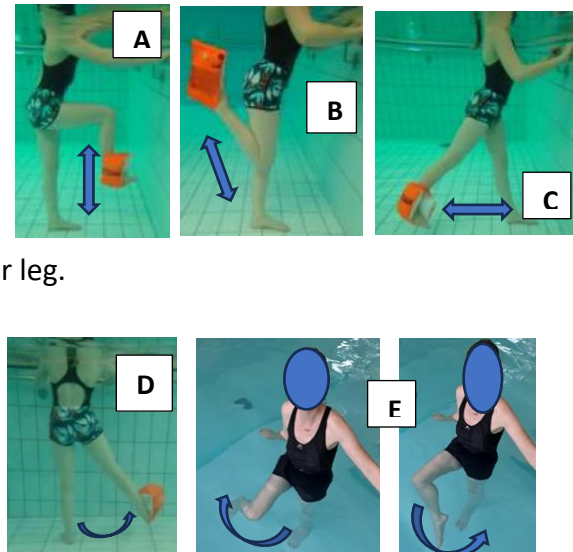
**A.** With a bent leg, march one foot up and down. Using an arm band will provide extra buoyancy to lift your leg higher (mobility), and extra drag when marching your foot back down (strength).

**B.** With knees together, bend one knee and bring foot up to your bottom, return to start position and repeat with the other leg.

**C.** With a straight leg, take the foot forwards and backwards, swap to repeat with the other leg.

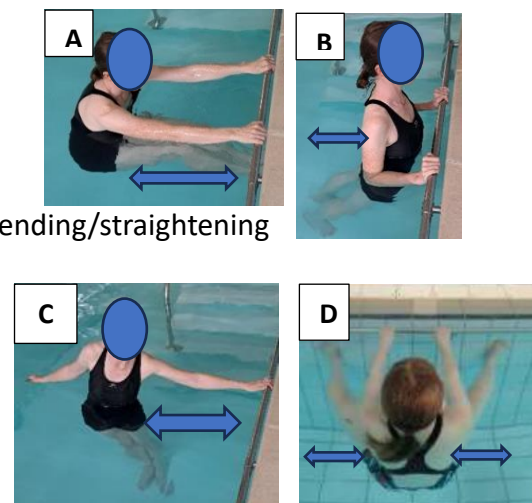
**D.** With a straight leg, take the foot out to the side and back in, repeat with the other leg. Add an armband for increased resistance.

**E.** Lift one knee so it's positioned in front of your hip, slowly rotate the thigh so your foot swings out to the side and then across your body.



## Spinal mobility

- Facing the wall, holding on with hands, with feet at the base of wall, drop bottom backwards to flex (bend) your spine.
- **A.** Progress this exercise by walking feet up the wall and bending/straightening your legs.
- **B.** Holding the wall/rail at arms-length, move your hips and upper body towards the wall to create a gentle arch in your spine.
- **C.** Standing sideways on to the wall – hold on and drop your hips towards the wall, then move your hips away from the wall.
- **D.** Hold on to the edge of the pool and place your feet against the side. Keeping your feet as high as you can, side-step around the edge of the pool.

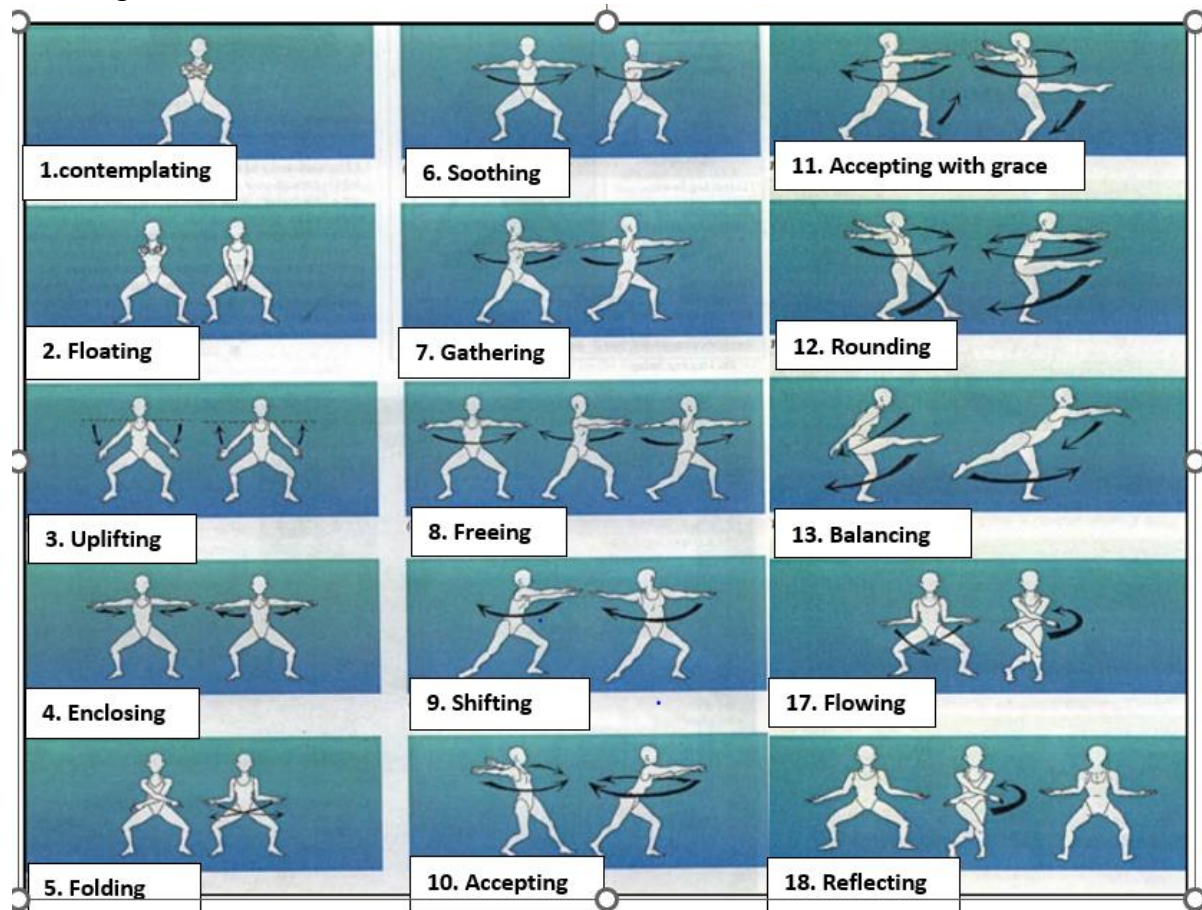






## Ai chi

Ai Chi is a total body strengthening and relaxation practice. It integrates mental, and physical energy. It is performed standing in shoulder-depth water using a combination of deep breathing and slow, broad movements. Video tutorials can be found for free online, including on You Tube.



## Self-care after exercising in water.

After exercising in water, it is important to drink plenty of fluid, if you are in a warm (hydrotherapy) pool the heat of the pool can dehydrate you. Even in a regular pool if you are exercising hard, you can lose moisture through sweat without realising it.

Exercising in water can also make you more tired than dry land exercise, take a rest if needed. Your body will usually get used to the effects after a few sessions and you will be able to introduce it into your routine without needing additional rests.

This handout is designed as a guide only. If you would like specific instruction, please speak with one of our team individually.

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