

PhysioBiz

Health newflashes

for bodies busy moving, working, playing, being.



Working with water for health and vitality

Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Society of Physiotherapy!

Water is an amazing medium – kind to aching bodies, it provides lift and cradles you gently. A pool of warm water is gentle on your joints and loosens stiff muscles.

Water is a natural medium for physiotherapy, for treatment that tweaks neurological dysfunction or mobilises stiff joints. But there's something else, something very useful, that water has to offer: drag and buoyancy. Movement in water can take advantage of the powerful combination of its natural resistance, and the closest to weightlessness you'll find on earth.

That's why many physiotherapists have a special interest in aquatic physiotherapy. It has been shown that treating conditions in the warm water is remarkably effective, whether the condition's nature is musculoskeletal, orthopaedic, rheumatological, or neurological.

"Exercise in water places less effort and demand on joints and nerves," says Mandy Thompson, chair of the South African Society of Physiotherapy's Aquatic Physiotherapy Group. "A physiotherapist can help people with a wide range of complaints by working with water's buoyancy and drag to help the body heal."

"We treat all kinds of patients, from babies with developmental problems to older people who've just had strokes, taking in all sorts along the way, including overstressed executives and injured animals," says Mandy. "Many athletes, both professional and amateur, turn to physiotherapists for aquatic physiotherapy for help after injuries," says Mandy. "Working their muscles and joints in warm water during the healing phase can be very effective, so much so that many top teams look to aquatic physiotherapy to rehabilitate injured athletes."

Of course, physiotherapists who go on to garner skills in aquatic physiotherapy retain their original land-based skills, so patients get a double whammy. "We may use aquatic physiotherapy on its own or package it with 'land based' therapy, whichever combination will achieve the best results. It's such a pleasure for patients with debilitating conditions to enjoy using their bodies in the kind, comforting and supportive medium of water, it's always rewarding to see how much they are able to achieve, with smiles on their faces!"

To find a physiotherapist with a special interest in aquatic therapy, go to www.saphysio.co.za.