



## Program Overview

The Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program is a recreational group exercise program that was co-developed with the YMCA of USA in 1983. A new and improved version was released in 2009. The program is conducted in warm water (a minimum of 83 degrees) and can be geared to participants with different ability levels. Exercises in the Basic class improve range of motion, muscle strength and endurance. The Plus version and optional deep water exercises supplement the activities in the Basic level with more intense endurance-building and muscle-strengthening exercises. A separate program, the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program

for Juvenile Arthritis, is also available for children and adolescents with juvenile arthritis.

The classes meet two to three times per week for 6-10 weeks or on an ongoing basis. Classes are taught by lay people and health and fitness professionals who have attended an 8 hour workshop. Although the classes are held in the water, swimming ability is not necessary to participate in the basic level of the program. The exercises include range of motion, muscle-strengthening exercises with optional equipment, socialization activities and an optional moderate-intensity endurance component.

## Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program Evaluation Studies At-A-Glance

<b>Arthritis Foundation, 1987</b>	One group, pre-post test comparison, four-month follow-up (n=60)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ↑function increased by 25%</li> <li>■ ↓pain reduced 18%</li> </ul>
<b>Suomi, 1997</b>	Randomized, controlled trial with women with arthritis; pre-post test comparison (n=27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ↑Increased ROM and muscle strength in lower body joints affected by arthritis</li> </ul>
<b>Patrick, 2001</b>	Randomized, controlled trial with delayed treatment control group; pre-post test comparison (n=249)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ↑Increased function</li> <li>■ ↑Increased perceived quality of life</li> <li>■ ↑Increased quality of well-being</li> </ul>
<b>Wang, 2007</b>	Randomized, controlled trial; data collected at 6 and 12 weeks (n=38)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ↑Increased knee and hip flexibility</li> <li>■ ↑Increased leg muscle strength</li> <li>■ ↑Increased aerobic fitness</li> </ul>

## References

Arthritis Foundation (1987). Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Exercise Program Evaluation, Atlanta, Georgia.

Patrick DL, Ramsey SD, Spencer AC, Kinne S, Belza B, Topolski T (2001). Economic evaluation of aquatic exercise for persons with osteoarthritis. *Medical Care* 39(5): 409-12.

Suomi R, Lindauer S (1997). Effectiveness of Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program on strength and range of motion in women with arthritis. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* 5:341-51.

Wang TJ, Belza B, Thompson FE, et al. (2007). Effects of aquatic exercise on flexibility, strength and aerobic fitness in adults with osteoarthritis of the hip or knee. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 57(2), 141-52.