

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF WATER

If you have been exercising on land but have now added the water experience to your regimen, you have discovered an environment where unique challenges and different equipment come into play. Like most newcomers, you probably have some questions that you would like answered. Maybe this will help.

WHY ARE WE WEARING WEBBED MITTS?



The primary use of the Aqua mitt, is for balance and stability, which is a safety feature. In any fitness environment, safety for the participants should be the number-one priority. On land, the air around participants in the gym is unlikely to knock anyone over; whereas, in the pool, water surrounds the participants with buoyancy and resistance, both of which have the ability to sweep them off their feet - usually when they least expect it. Therefore, learning to balance and stabilize is the first basic skill taught in an aquafitness class. Adding the extra surface area of a mitt helps to maximize vertical balance in water for good postural training. Teaching the correct sculling techniques with the mitt allows for stabilization of body alignment, whether at rest or in motion. While traveling through water in any direction resistance is increased and inertia created, the participant can use the mitt to assist such travel and maintain efficient movement. For strength training, the mitt can be used to train specific muscle groups in the upper body by alternately "webbing" towards the target muscles and "slicing" to rest on the return. In lower body target training, the mitts are once again used for balance to allow the movements to be effected through good posture.

WHY ARE WE WEARING SHOES?

Functional Fitness are two words heard a lot these days. The emphasis in an aquafitness class is to help some participants (especially as they age) remain sufficiently fit and efficient to enjoy their day to day activities, hopefully, free from injury. For others, it is for training their bodies for sports specific goals. Because we spend most of our time on land

Student Handout

in a vertical position, posture and good body alignment are the cornerstones of such a regimen. Shoes provides the wearer with more stability and traction for an upright stance when moving through water, as well as further reducing impact when jumping in shallow water. The shoe also creates additional resistance in deep or shallow water which will increase strength on land.

WHY DON'T WE WORK OUT IN TIME TO THE MUSIC?

Very few people have the same body composition. Any two people may be built with the same height and weight, but it is unlikely that their muscle to fat ratio is identical. Muscles move, fat floats. To achieve a good work-out each participant needs to be educated to work through their own, comfortable, range of motion and at their own speed, whether for aerobic strength, muscle strength or stretching. In many pools, few people can work out in the exact same depth of water, the deeper the water the greater the increase in the buoyancy effect. Because some participants may be "floating" more than others, the probability of any two people completing a given move at the same time is quite remote. For instance, a



class asked to perform a set of rebound movements should somewhat resemble popping corn - some up, some down- while those unable to jump at all are given the option to work in a neutral or safer working position for their own condition. Music needs to be used as a motivator not a metronome.

IF I CAN SWIM WHY DO I NEED A BELT?

Swimming is a horizontal exercise in which the least resistance created helps produce speed. Aquafitness is a vertical exercise program that creates resistance to develop strength. If you are in a deep-water class you don't want to use all your energy trying to keep your head above water. A belt allows you to balance work with rest. You can target specific muscle groups to tone your body, train for good posture and body movement, move in all directions for an aerobic workout, and stretch through a greater range of motion in the water, while being supported by the belt. If working out in shallow water, a belt can offer extra buoyancy and cushioning for someone suffering with painful hip or knee joints, foot or back problems, or just give some extra confidence and protection to a non-swimmer.

By Drusilla Leitch