

# AQUATICS PROGRAM

## FACT SHEET

In the Aquatics Program, we offer a variety of goal-focused interventions including:

- **Aquatic education:** This program is appropriate for any patient with an interest in swimming, exercise, water sports or just hanging out in the pool. It can also include specialized education for patients who have community pool, beach or lake access questions, and basic water safety education for patients with leisure interested that occur near water (fishing, boating, etc.). We also provide aquatic resources, including exercise and floatation equipment options, types of pool lifts or access tools, and how to locate other pool facilities near the patient's hometown
- **Swimming:** Staff will review water safety basics like floating and rolling over, as well as how to swim in both supine and prone positions, with and without floatation, and with and without a mask or snorkel.
- **Water exercise:** Our water exercises range from stretching and ROM to core/UE/LE exercises to ambulation and water aerobics, and are conducted in individual sessions, groups and scheduled classes. Patients can participate with their therapists or be checked off to participate in classes with caregivers or on their own as appropriate.
- **Water sports:** This program includes education on the options for waterskiing, jet skiing and tubing, as well as opportunities for coordinated outing to the lake to participate in water sports.
- **Scuba:** Our Discover Scuba class happens on the first Wednesday of each month, and provides everything from education on the deck to actually getting into the pool with certified divers to practice scuba with the tank and regulator.
- **Water polo:** This game, played sitting in inner tubes, is a great therapy group for patients appropriate to get into the pool who need to work on UE ROM and strengthening, cardio, transfers, coordinator, and a host of other physical goals.
- **Relaxation techniques:** Staff can work with patients and train caregivers on activities to use in the water which help with ROM and relaxation.
- **Miscellaneous:** Our staff are open to co-treats and group sessions in the pool to work on whatever the patient's goals are, or even just on the deck to work on home pool access.
- **Pool check-offs:** Patients can be checked off to use the pool on their own or with family for swimming or exercise. The patient must pass the swim test to get in unsupervised. If the patient will be getting into the pool with a caregiver, the caregiver must receive training and pass a check-off test, which includes education on pool transfers, precautions and locker room rules. The check-off is then documented in the computer and in a check-off book kept in the pool office.

### Availability & Referrals

The pool is heated year-round. The coldest therapy day is Friday (88 degrees) for patients with MS or other neurological disorders who are sensitive to heat. The warmer days are Monday through Thursday (90-92 degrees), with Wednesday being the warmest.

### When sending referrals, please consider the following:

- Is the patient appropriate to get into the pool? (If not and they will not be prior to discharge, you can still refer them for education only)
- If the only goal is water exercise, does the patient want this only as part of their therapy regimen or is this a leisure interest they plan to pursue? (If the goal is only for therapeutic purposes, they may not be as high a priority to schedule with our staff vs. with therapy staff)
- Is the patient appropriate for a co-treat? (The aquatics staff are happy to co-treat on sessions to add their expertise for the ultimate benefit of the client)
- The patient's primary Recreation Therapist is the one sending the specialist referrals, so please consult with them before submitting a referral, as they may have already done so.

### Scheduling

**Scheduling pool sessions requires 2-hour blocks on the patient's schedule:** one for the pool sessions itself, and one hour to get cleaned up and dressed afterwards. Due to teams scheduling so far in advance, aquatic staff often have a hard time finding the 2-hour blocks needed during the therapy day. Creative scheduling helps!

- **Patients need to show up for the pool session dressed to get wet.** If the patient has to get dressed during their session time, it take too much time out of the session
  - Most sessions only entail about 30-40 minutes of actual aquatics times. The remainder of the session generally includes time spent getting into/out of the pool, getting set up with pool equipment, and setting up towels/etc. in patient wheelchairs upon getting out.
  - Acceptable attire can include a bathing suit under clothes which can be easily removed.
- If a patient is more than 15 minutes late, their session may be canceled.
- Aquatic staff may reach out to see if you have ADL/transfer goals which can be addressed during the after-pool hour. (Could your session be the shower/dressing hour either in the locker room or the patient's room/apartment?)
- Aquatic staff may schedule the patient the hour before lunch specifically for Day Program patients who may not require much assistance for bathing/dressing; they can complete this task and eat lunch during the same hour.

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### Precautions

#### 1. Open Wounds

- a. Patients CANNOT get into the pool if they have any open skin sores.
- b. This includes sores with scabs; they must be completely closed and healed.
- c. *If a patient has had a skin flap in the past 6 months the patient must have medical clearance from the physician/skin team before being cleared to get into the pool even if the flap is visually healed due to standard flap precautions regarding submersion in water.*

#### 2. Bowel/Bladder

- a. Patients must have demonstrated a stable bowel program prior to being scheduled for the pool.
  - i. General rule of thumb is no invols (involuntary bowel movements) for 2 weeks. Additionally, if the patient has a pattern of constipation without invols but requiring medical intervention, that does not constitute a stable program.
  - ii. If a patient has demonstrated a stable bowel program but than has 1 invol, they must wait at least 72 hours to establish that this was an isolated incident.
  - iii. Patients can get in the pool with colostomy once the stoma has healed.
- b. Patients must not have any bladder incontinence outside of their regular bladder program.
  - i. Patients can get into the pool with healed SPTs and with foleys (leg bag is recommend vs. the bed bag).
  - ii. Males may wear a condom catheter if they experience reflexing.
  - iii. Females who are reflexing have the option to have a foley inserted before the pool session.
- c. Patients who are self-bowel/bladder should be able to hold it for at least 15 minutes once the urge is felt (this is to allow for the time to get the patient out of the pool and into the bathroom). *If the patient experiences urgency, they are not appropriate to get into the pool!*

#### 2. Contact Precautions

- a. Patients CANNOT get into the pool if they are on contact precautions.
- b. There are occasional exceptions for patients who are colonized.
  - i. You must get clearance from Infection Control and Rebecca Washburn.
  - ii. You must ask (do not assume) if they are colonized and therefore cleared.

#### 2. Bracing

- a. Patients in c-collars or thoracic bracing should not get in the pool without medical clearance.
- b. If the patient will have the brace discharged prior to hospital discharge, it is in their best interest to wait until the bracing comes off before getting into the pool.
- c. If the patient is scheduled to discharge home with the brace, there must be a signed doctor's order in the chart clearing them to participate in aquatics with the brace.

### Staff Aquatic Check-Off

Staff must pass the aquatic check-off for staff in order to get patients into the pool on their own. The check-off consists of:

- Swimming the length of the pool down and back twice.
- Swimming to the 6' depth, retrieving a swim brick from the bottom of the pool, and placing the brick on the side of the pool.
- Being able to verbalize precautions and standard pool procedures as outlined above.

**\*If you need to schedule a check-off or aren't sure when yours expires, please contact [Rebecca Washburn](#).**



## Shepherd Center

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