Health Benefits of Water-based Exercise

Swimming is the fourth most popular sports activity in the United States and a good way to get regular aerobic physical activity. Just two and a half hours per week of aerobic physical activity, such as swimming, bicycling, or running can decrease the risk of chronic illnesses. This can also lead to improved health for people with diabetes and heart disease. Swimmers have about half the risk of death compared with inactive people. People report enjoying water-based exercise more than exercising on land. They can also exercise longer in water than on land without increased effort or joint or muscle pain.

Water-based Exercise and Chronic Illness

Water-based exercise can help people with chronic diseases. For people with arthritis, it improves use of affected joints without worsening symptoms. People with rheumatoid arthritis have more health improvements after participating in hydrotherapy than with other activities. Water-based exercise also improves the use of affected joints and decreases pain from osteoarthritis.

Water-based Exercise and Mental Health

Water-based exercise improves mental health. Swimming can improve mood in both men and women. For people with fibromyalgia, it can decrease anxiety, and exercise therapy in warm water can decrease depression and improve mood. Water-based exercise can improve the health of mothers and their unborn children and has a positive effect on the mothers’ mental health. Parents of children with developmental disabilities find that recreational activities, such as swimming, improve family connections.

Water-based Exercise and Older Adults

Water-based exercise can benefit older adults by improving the quality of life and decreasing disability. It also improves or maintains the bone health of post-menopausal women.

A Good Choice

Exercising in water offers many physical and mental health benefits and is a good choice for people who want to be more active. When in the water, remember to protect yourself and others from illness and injury by practicing healthy and safe swimming behaviors.

References


**Article Resources**

Health Benefits of Water-Based Exercise  
http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/health_benefits_water_exercise.html