

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & TIPS FOR PRE AND POST-NATAL AQUA FITNESS CLASS

Welcome to the pre- and post-natal aqua fitness class at Mulberry pool, taught by Cynthia Melcher. Here, I provide some important information for new and returning class participants to help you make the most of your time in class and protect your health.

Class is organized into 5 phases:

1. Thermal warm-up---This phase is to generate heat by using large muscles, including thigh and upper back/arm (e.g., high-knee jog with active arms swinging through the water's resistance). A warmed-up body is less prone to injury.
2. Active stretching---This phase prepares our muscles for work by waking them up and stretching them out a little. Stretches in this phase should not be held for any length of time.
3. Cardio workout---We do 20-25 mins of cardio workout. In this class, we do not do a deeply intensive workout, but we do want to increase our heart rates and work towards cardiopulmonary fitness. No one should work harder than the instructor, and, in many cases, participants will not be able to work much at all. Everyone in this class is at a different stage of fitness and progression in their pregnancy, therefore you should not compare yourself to anyone; rather, compare yourself to your own progress (use your own scale of 0-10, most people beginning around 3-4 and most people wanting to aim for 5-7). We do not check heart rates; rather we use the 'breath test' to determine our level of workout. If, during the most intense part of the cardio workout, you could sing because you are so unwinded, you may want to push harder, faster. On the other hand, if you are so winded that you would have to gasp to speak, then you are working too hard.

Ways to adjust your workout up or down:

- move faster or slower (velocity)
 - push more or less body surface against the water (resistance)
 - use whole limb or half limb (lever length)
4. Toning & Strengthening---We do some work with resistance equipment to strengthen and tone muscles. Equipment may include noodles, bells, rubberbands.
 5. Passive stretching---We do a few deep stretches to wrap up. This is to stretch out the muscles and help release any build-ups of metabolites that could result in soreness. These stretches should be held for 10-30 seconds. I will give you some to do ONLY in the pool and some you can safely do in the shower.

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS

Wear a **relatively supportive bathing suit** (e.g., a relatively snug lycra or nylon suit) well into your pregnancy; a more accommodating suit with more room for the baby can be worn in the last months, as necessary. Bikinis and loose-fitting one-piece suits are not recommended, as they will not support you and your baby.

The **City of Fort Collins provides all equipment needed**. However, you may wish to enhance your workout by bringing your own ankle and/or wrist weights or aqua gloves. If interested, ask me about these items---I can show some samples we have at

Mulberry Pool. I recommend wearing **aqua shoes** (or even tennis shoes) while working out; it's almost as important as wearing sneakers when playing any terrestrial sport, because it helps protect your feet and cushion your joints against concussion from landing and pushing off. ALWAYS keep a **power bar** and a **water bottle** in your gym bag. Particularly when pregnant, you may become dehydrated and/or need to replenish your carbohydrates reserves immediately after working out. You are welcome to bring your water bottle to poolside and drink (small amounts) during your workout.

IMPORTANT TIPS FOR YOUR COMFORT AND MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WORKOUT

- 1) **'Suck and tuck'**: A major goal in this class is to realign your pelvis. Pregnancy tends to pull your pelvis forward from the front/top, which puts pressure on your lower back and can result in a great deal of discomfort. We take advantage of your buoyancy in the water to tuck your fanny under you and suck in your tummy (to the extent you can). This helps put your pelvis---thus your lower back---into a more neutral and comfortable position. It braces your lower back as well, helping to protect it from injury.
- 2) **BREATHE!!** Seems obvious, right? Except many people do not breathe enough or regularly when working out. It makes all the difference in the world if, when you work out, you breathe deeply and regularly with the rhythm of your exercises. Basically, you want to exhale on exertion and inhale when you relax. For a given exercise, the ideal time for taking in a breath may change as your pregnancy progresses, especially when we do tummy crunches---just be aware of what your needs and what your body is telling you and adjust accordingly.
- 3) **Avoid bouncing**. To do this, avoid pushing off the floor of the pool and focus instead on pulling up your knees. Also, when we are working a single depth of water, be sure to be in water that is the correct depth for you---usually up to about the top of your suit. Tall people in shallow water will bounce much more.
- 4) **Heels to the floor**. Every time your foot lands, you want to think of landing 'toe-ball-heel' to be sure your heel gets to the floor. If you work primarily off your toes, you will make yourself vulnerable to leg cramps, as working off the toes tightens the calf more and more until it may cramp up.
- 5) **Feel free to get out if you need to use the 'facilities.'** Your pregnancy may not allow you to get through a class without a visit to the bathroom. That is fine. Just be sure that I see you go so I don't panic about where under the water you are!
- 6) **Let me know if you have any pain**. While it is rare that anyone develops pain in this class, pregnancy and existing injuries can bring on minor pain. If you have pain or other notable discomfort, please let me know. I may be able to suggest some alternative exercises or minor changes in your daily routine that may help.
- 7) **Smile and have fun!** In this class, there is a lot of socializing, which is expected and invited. I only ask that you be sure that whomever you talk with is into talking too... some gals come to get a fairly serious workout, while others come to connect with other women through pregnancy. And do smile and laugh! I try to encourage you to smile, as smiling helps us have fun and enjoy working out. More importantly, it is a good way to release major tension that some of us hold in our faces.

Low – Intensity Workouts: Focus on Pre-Post Natal and Older Adults

Water workouts aimed for the pre-natal woman are also extremely beneficial for both the post-natal woman and the older adult. This workout is aimed to give these populations cardiovascular exercise and toning directed to their specific needs and abilities.

Benefits of Water Exercise to Pre-Natal and Older Adult Populations:

- Reduced leg cramping and swelling
- Prevention of varicose veins
- Relief of lower back pressure and pain
- Improved posture
- Improved circulation
- Improved flexibility
- Eased gastrointestinal discomfort, including constipation and urine leakage
- Enhanced muscular balance, strength, and control; joint stability.

Be careful of overstretching with both of these populations. Overstretching can lead to muscle pulls and muscle or ligament tears. Recommend only the normal range of stretch for each person, regardless of their ability to stretch further.

Watch exercise intensity with these populations. To gauge exertion level, use RPE (Rate of Perceived Exertion) instead of heart rate. Heart rates are often skewed with these populations, due to higher or lower blood pressure, medications, and colder water temperatures. Both populations (pre-natal and older adult) can move quickly from aerobic to anaerobic, so be sure breathing cues and chest expansion in order to expand lung capacity are part of the workout.

Pre-Post Natal and Older Adult Water Workout

Warm-up:

- March-it-out in place.
- March-it-out, wide knees.
- March-it-out, wide knees, travel left, then right.
- March-it-out, wide knees, then together, alternating wide knees and together.
- Low front kicks, alternating legs, no hopping, traveling forward and backwards.
- Front kicks, full leg extension, alternating legs, traveling forward and backwards.
- Straight leg kicks, alternating legs, kicking out in a “V”.

- Front lunges, traveling forwards and backwards.
- Side lunges (squats).

Cardio Work:

- In place, raise right knee, then plant heel behind; repeat for a set of 16.
- In place, kick right heel to rear end; repeat for set of 16.
- In place, raise right knee to hip level, kick lower leg out front; repeat for set of 16.
- In place, raise right knee to hip level, turn knee out & return to center; repeat for set of 16.
- *Repeat all of above with left leg.*
- Pendulums.
- Baseball swing, feet shoulder-width apart.
- Half-jacks.
- Half-jacks, elbows bent, arms open/close (clap hands under water).
- Standing in place, pelvic tilts.
- Wide-knee jog, plie arms.
- Low front kicks, travel forward and backwards.
- Cross-country, slide feet.
- Side kicks, feet do not go above knee level, alternating sides.
- Cross-country.
- Side kicks, feet raise a little higher.
- Cross-country; faster.
- Side kicks, higher.
- Half-jacks.
- Cross-country.
- Low front kicks, travel forwards and backwards.
- "V" kicks, full leg extension, alternating legs, travel forwards and backwards.
- Cross-country.
- Half-jacks.
- Half-Jacks traveling sideways.

- Side lunges (squats).
- Standing in place, breaststroke arms, full arm extension and chest expansion.
- Breaststroke arms reversed.
- Standing in place, arms out for balance, half-moons with right leg; repeat for set of 16.
- Standing in place, arms out for balance, half-moons with left leg; repeat for set of 16.
- Low front kicks.
- Cross-country.
- Straight leg kicks to front, full leg extension, alternating legs.
- Cross-country.
- Half-jacks.
- Side lunges (squats).
- Half moons with right leg for set, then left.
- Right leg swings front to back; repeat with left.
- Speed skater, travel forwards then backwards.
- High-knee march; push shoulders back.
- Wide-knee jog, arms push H2O down at sides.
- Low front kicks.
- “V” kicks, full leg extension, alternating legs.
- Cross-country.
- Straight leg kicks to front, full leg extension, alternating legs.
- Cross-country.
- Half-jacks.
- Side lunges (squats).
- High-knee jog.
- Half moons with right leg for set; then left; hands out of water.
- Right leg swings front to back; repeat with left; hands out of water.
- Speed skater, traveling forwards and backwards.
- High-knee jog, hands push H2O out from sides.
- Half-jacks, hands clap, then shoulder-blade squeeze (chest expansion).

- Pendulum with arm swing behind back, travel right and left.
- In place, squats, feet wider than shoulders, incorporate kegels.
- Pendulum with arm swing behind back, travel right and left.
- Squats in place, incorporating kegels.
- In place, runner's stretch, fast pace.
- Speed skater, travel forwards and backwards.
- Jogging, hands press H2O down at sides, alternating knees wide and together.
- Pendulum with arm swing behind back, travel right and left.
- Squats in place, incorporating kegels.
- Half-jacks, hands clap, then shoulder-blade squeeze (chest expansion).
- Jog in a circle.
- Forward lunges with bicep curls to shoulders, travel forwards and backwards.
- Runner's stretch in place, alternating sides (forward lunges in place).
- Backward lunges, incorporate shoulder blade squeeze, alternating sides.

Toning (using noodles):

- While jogging forwards and backwards, noodle push-ups; change hand position (hands wide, hands shoulder-width, hands together, etc.).
- While jogging, hold noodle in "U" shape, squeeze noodle ends together under water.
- *Repeat above moves.*
- While jogging, hands on noodle wider than shoulders, push entire noodle under water (small abdominal crunch).
- Noodle under elbows, alternate knee lifts (slight bicycle).
- Upright crunches, left ankle crossed over right knee, set of 10; repeat with right ankle over left knee, set of 10.
- Standing with noodle held behind back, shoulder drop alternating sides (reach right hand/noodle to right knee, left hand/noodle to left knee).
- Sitting on swing, breaststroke arms and bicycle legs, travel forwards and backwards.
- In place sitting on swing, alternating ankle crosses; raise and lower feet while criss-crossing ankles.

- With noodle under elbows, soles of feet together and knees wide, swing side to side (diamonds).
- Diamonds front to back.
- Diamonds up to front, then knees together back down (butterfly).
- Cross-country, with noodle under elbows.
- Half-jack legs, with noodle under elbows.
- Jogging in place, press entire noodle under H2O with right arm at right side, set of 10; repeat with left arm.
- Standing noodle push-ups.
- Jogging in place, mini noodle push-ups.
- Standing in place, noodle in right hand swings across front of body; repeat with left arm.
- Back against wall, pelvic tilts.
- Back against wall, feet shoulder-width, kegels; pulse kegels.
- Back against wall, push noodle forward (rolling the back), and pull in to body.
- Back against wall, push noodle down to knees and raise.

Cool down: (opposite of warm-up)

- March-it-out in place.
- March-it-out, wide knees.
- March-it-out, wide knees, travel left, then right.
- March-it-out, wide knees, then together, alternating wide knees and together.
- Low front kicks, alternating legs, no hopping, traveling forward and backwards.
- Front kicks, full leg extension, alternating legs, traveling forward and backwards.
- Straight leg kicks, alternating legs, kicking out in a “V”.
- Front lunges, traveling forwards and backwards.
- Side lunges (squats).