



# Aquatic Therapy for adults and children

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Information for patients, parents, guardians, and carers

## What is Aquatic Therapy?

Aquatic Therapy (formerly hydrotherapy) can be described as “exercise in water”. The exercises carried out in the Aquatic Therapy pool are not the same as the exercises you carry out at home, as they are modified to use the properties of the water.

## Why have I been recommended for Aquatic Therapy?

Aquatic Therapy can help a variety of musculoskeletal, neurological, and rheumatological conditions. The specific benefits are listed below.

- Pain relief
- Reduction of muscle spasm
- Increased range of joint movement
- Improved muscle strength and balance
- Learning to walk again
- Relaxation
- Play based exercises (children).

You will have been referred by your physiotherapist. They will explain why they have recommended that you have Aquatic Therapy, and then discuss with you if you would like to continue with this as a treatment option.

If for any reason (such as fear of water) you feel this therapy is not for you, then other physiotherapy treatments can often be used as an alternative (for example gym based classes or individual exercises). Being unable to swim is not a problem as our pool is not deep. Armbands can be provided for children.

Although most patients are eligible for Aquatic Therapy, your physiotherapist will complete a health screening form with you, as there are a few medical conditions that would stop you having Aquatic Therapy.

### Are there any side effects to Aquatic Therapy?

- General tiredness, due to the warm temperature in the pool and surrounding area.
- Dehydration, due to the warm temperature in the pool and surrounding area.
- Increase in pain / aching after a session. The staff in the Aquatic Therapy pool will slowly increase the exercises in your programme to limit the chances of this happening.

### What should I do before my Aquatic Therapy appointment?

- You should eat a light snack one to two hours before your appointment.
- **Do not drink any alcohol in the 12 hours before your Aquatic Therapy session.**
- Although you will be asked to have a shower in the Aquatic Therapy Department before entering the pool, you must also have a shower at home before leaving. You also need to change into your swimwear at home.
- Towels are provided by the hospital, or you can bring your own.
- Please continue with any land exercises that your physiotherapist has recommended during the time you come to Aquatic Therapy, as this will help your recovery.
- Please bring any medication that may be needed, for example asthma pumps and diabetic medication.

### What should I expect at my appointment?

- When you arrive at the Physiotherapy Department book in at reception. A physiotherapist will come and bring you through to the Aquatic Therapy Department.
- 15 to 20 minutes with therapist help and supervision will be given as needed.
- You must shower before entering and after leaving the pool (hoist, changing, and shower facilities are available at all pools).
- The water temperature is 32 to 35.5°C.
- Pool sessions are for men and women, and are run by male and female therapists.
- Patients using walking aids will need to use the Aquatic Therapy walking frames in the pool side area, due to the risk of slippery floor surfaces.
- Relatives / Carers / Friends should stay outside the pool area (unless agreed by staff and other pool users).
- Parents of young children having Aquatic Therapy will be allowed into the pool area.

### How many Aquatic Therapy sessions will I have?

You will be offered up to three sessions in our pool.

### Can I continue with my exercises in a local pool?

- Yes. It is expected that you will continue your exercises on your own in your local swimming pool.
- You can start using a local pool whilst having Aquatic Therapy, but we recommend you wait and discuss this with the physiotherapist working with you in the pool first. This allows them to teach you the appropriate exercises for your condition, and guide you as to how much pool based exercise you are advised to complete.
- If you have any problems with exercising in your local pool, please discuss this with your physiotherapist if you are still receiving treatment. If you have completed your physiotherapy treatment, please discuss this with your GP.

### Further information

If you have any questions, please speak with your physiotherapist or contact the Physiotherapy Department on 01227 783065. In an emergency you must leave the pool immediately and assemble where advised, as instructed by your therapist.

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals website (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/>).

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