

AKWA Awareness

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Aquatic Exercise Myths Set Straight!

By Lori Templeman

This is the fourth in a series of commonly asked questions regarding vertical aquatic exercise. These articles are designed to help clarify misinformation common to the aquatic fitness industry.

Topic #4: Drinking Water: Why do I have to hydrate during an aquatic fitness class?

Many people already know about the importance of drinking water during exercise to keep the body cool and hydrated. When on land, sweat appears as our body heats up to serve as a reminder that we are exerting energy and losing fluids. For some reason, this concept does not always transfer to water exercise. I have heard many participants claim that they do not sweat during aquatic class, they don't get thirsty, and/or avoid drinking water because they don't want to have to exit the pool to use the bathroom.

The loss of fluids during water exercise is not as obvious and drinking water can be forgotten or may seem unnecessary. Our body is already wet and we are not as aware of sweating. In my Aquatic Exercise Myths Set Straight article: Can I get a good cardiovascular workout and lose weight through water exercise? (*AKWA Awareness: April/May 2010*), we determined that perceived exertion levels in the water are capable of matching perceived exertion levels on land. After working through a challenging cardio interval set and working our muscles to fatigue, why wouldn't we want to hydrate?

In general, our body experiences a cooling effect once we are submerged in the water, which reduces the risk of overheating. However, overheating can still occur during water exercise and heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke are possible if proper hydration is not followed. Factors that increase this risk include high pool temperature (87 degrees or above) during cardio formats, hot air temperature, humidity, and a high level of exertion.

According to the Aquatic Exercise Association, studies show that the thirst response is not as strong for individuals exercising in water and this diminishes the desire to hydrate. While we may not sweat as much as we would in a workout on land, our muscles are still working hard to meet the demands of the workout. To avoid cramps and fatigue we need fluid replacement. As an instructor, I am in the habit of including and promoting "water pit stops" every 20 minutes during my class, or more frequently in extreme weather. Participants are also encouraged to stop and drink as often as needed, even if they don't feel thirsty.

Make it a habit to bring a bottle of water to class and grab a sip as often as needed. Extra water may be necessary if you regularly consume caffeinated drinks. Caffeine increases urine output causing you to dehydrate faster. Make sure you are also drinking before and after class, especially if you forget to bring water with you to the pool during the workout. Even though you are surrounded by water, you still need to drink water! Your hydration is a critical component of exercise safety and performance.

Bottoms up!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lori Templeman is the owner of Fitness Temple in Sacramento, CA. She is a personal trainer, group fitness instructor, presenter, and freelance writer contributing frequently to AKWA Magazine. She holds certifications through AEA, ACE, AFAA, and the Arthritis Foundation. Lori is currently training to become an AEA Aquatic Training Specialist. She can be reached at akwalori@hotmail.com.