

PHYSICAL THERAPY

AT BRIARCLIFF & JEFFERSON VALLEY, P.C.

Aqua Therapy

Aqua therapy, or therapeutic use of water, dates back to 460 BC, when water was used to treat disease. The first hydrotherapy center in the U.S. opened in Boston in 1903. The use of hydro-therapy increased significantly in the 1920's in response to the polio epidemic.

Today, hydrotherapy continues to be used, and is a modality in physical therapy that has become more and more useful. Aqua therapy is used and can be beneficial for many different diagnoses. Arthritis, sprains, joint replacements, back injuries and surgeries, fibromyalgia, and Lyme's disease are just some of the problems aqua-therapy can help.

Exercise in the water is more easily tolerated by most patients and can often be started long before land based exercise. The properties of water make this so.

Water's buoyancy allows patients to exercise with the assistance of water, decreased weight bearing forces on the joints, and decreased stresses on the ligaments and structures around the joints.

Hydrostatic pressure is the pressure the water exerts on the body when it is submerged. This can be

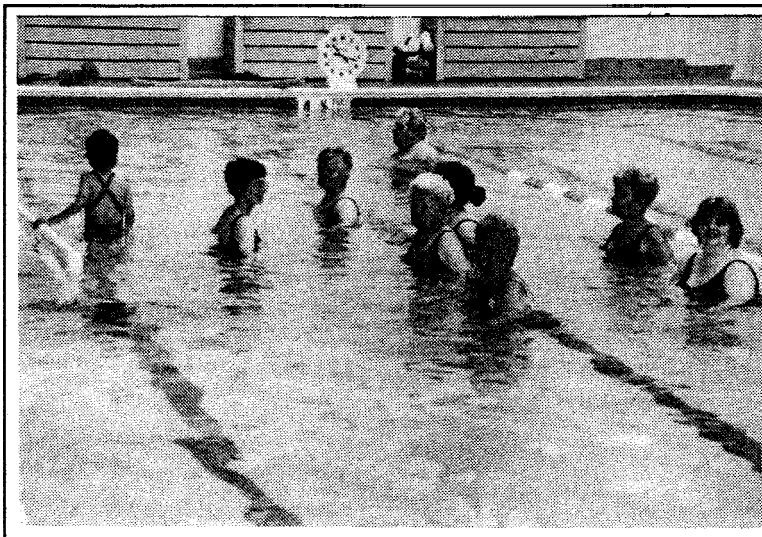
used effectively to reduce swelling in a joint, depending on the depth of the water.

The viscosity of water allows the use of water for strengthening exercises. Equipment can be used to increase the viscosity resistance causing more difficult exercise.

Aqua therapy plays a key role in healing patients in physical therapy. It can be used to improve joint motion, muscle strength, relaxation, endurance, weight bearing, normal walking, and functional activities. While aqua therapy may sound ideal for all

patients, there are precautions to even this type of therapy.

Some heart conditions, extreme high blood pressure, incontinence, behavioral disorders, high risk pregnancy, and some breathing disorders, can limit patients' participation in pool exercise programs. Knowledge by patients' doctors, therapists, as well as the patient themselves will ensure a maximally safe and beneficial, as well as fun, exercise program in the water for all.



Aquatic Exercise class with Physical Therapist Pat Burkitt