

Take the (exercise) plunge

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(HealthDay)—You can do more than just beat the heat the next time you go to the pool. Whether you swim or do aquatic exercises, working out in water improves strength, flexibility and cardiovascular health.

Water provides more resistance than air, allowing you to [exercise](#) at a higher intensity with less wear and tear on the body and less risk of injury. That's great for people with [joint pain](#).

Swimming is a perfect water workout, according to the American Council on Exercise. Doing a half hour of the front crawl at an easy pace can burn about 250 calories, depending on your weight. If you pick up the pace, you can burn about 400 calories in the same amount of time.

If you're new to swimming, start with 5- to 10-minute sessions. As you build stamina, add more minutes. Mixing up your strokes can keep your routine from getting boring as well as work different muscles.

For instance, the breaststroke is great for chest and shoulder muscles. The front crawl and backstroke target many muscles in the back. And the butterfly does a great job of engaging core muscles.

Not a strong swimmer? Consider a few swim lessons or find other ways to work out in the water. Take your jogging routine to the shallow end of the pool. Run in place, lifting your knees up toward the surface and pumping your arms vigorously.

If group classes are your thing, check out your Y or municipal pool. Besides [water](#) aerobics, many offer aquatic kickboxing, Pilates and even yoga.

More information: The American Council on Exercise lists [a variety of pool exercises that target key muscle groups](#) so you can create your own water workout.

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