Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

# Aquatic Physiotherapy

Version number: **3**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

# Aquatic Physiotherapy

## Patient and Carer Information

## Physiotherapy Services

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## 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 benefits of the being in water.

## Why have I been recommended for Aquatic Therapy?

Aquatic Therapy can be beneficial in a variety of musculoskeletal 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
- Improve patterns of walking
- Relaxation

You have been referred by your Physiotherapist. They will explain the recommendation to attend Aquatic Therapy and discuss it as a treatment option.

If for any reason (such as fear of water) you feel this therapy is not appropriate for you, 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 relatively small and has variable depth areas.

Your Physiotherapist will complete a health screening form with you as a few medical conditions may prevent its use: most patients are eligible for this therapy.

Are there any potential side effects to Aquatic Therapy?

- General tiredness – due to the warm temperature in the pool environment
- Dehydration – due to the warm temperature in the pool environment
- Increase in pain / aching after a session – the staff in the Aquatic Therapy pool will gradually progress the exercises in your programme to minimise the possibility 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
- Bring your own swim wear and towels
- Land based exercises recommended by your physiotherapist can be continued alongside the aquatic therapy to maximise recovery
- Please bring any medication that may be needed, for example asthma inhalers, glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) sprays and diabetic medication

## What should I expect at my appointment?

- When you arrive at Platt Bridge Health Centre, please book in at community reception on the ground floor. The reception is at the far right of the patient waiting area. The receptionist will show you where to go

- You will then be greeted by a member of the Aquatic Therapy staff, and they will show you through to the changing area
- Please arrive 10-15 minutes before your allocated appointment time, to allow for parking and getting changed
- For infection control reasons, you will be asked to shower before entering and after exiting the pool
- Hoist, changing, and shower facilities are available at the pool
- The water temperature is 32°C to 36°C
- Pool sessions are for mixed genders and could be run by therapists of any gender
- Relatives / Carers / Friends should remain outside the pool area (unless agreed by staff and other pool users)

## How many Aquatic therapy sessions will I have?

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

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

- In the long term, we may encourage you to continue your exercise programs independently in your local swimming pool
- You can start using a local pool whilst having the 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 to give you guidance on how much of the pool-based exercise is advisable for you
- You will be reviewed by your referring therapist after completing your aquatic therapy sessions

- If you have any problems with exercising in your local pool, please discuss this with your Physiotherapist at the review after your aquatic therapy sessions. You can also obtain referral for community-based exercise with the Be Well Wigan Team via your Physiotherapist, General Practitioner (GP) or practice nurses.

## Points to note

- Let the therapist know if you have any relevant changes in your condition
- Inform a member of staff if you feel unwell whilst in the water
- Inform the Physiotherapist if you have any open wounds, skin lesions, or ulcers
- Verrucas and athlete's foot should be covered with a swim sock
- Please do not use shampoo or shower gel in the shower as this can make the floor slippery. Please do not use creams, moisturisers or lotions on the day of the aquatic therapy session, as this can leave a residue on the surface of the water
- Stay hydrated. Have a drink after using the pool and give yourself a few minutes to allow your body to adjust to room temperature
- In some instances, it may be necessary to cancel your session at short notice if the pool chlorine levels are not within acceptable ranges. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. Please ensure the contact numbers we have for you are up to date

**Finally, if you are unsure or concerned about anything just ask.**

We aim for this to be an educational opportunity for you to learn appropriate and beneficial exercises.

## Policy on missed appointments

**Unable to attend (UTA)**

Cancel your appointment as soon as possible, if you have a high temperature or are feeling unwell. Please inform the Department as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment, as this may enable us to offer your session to another patient. Unfortunately, due to waiting lists we are not always able to reallocate an alternative appointment but will try to do so if possible.

**Did not attend (DNA)**

If you fail to keep your appointment without notifying the department in advance you will be discharged, and subsequent pool sessions will be cancelled. If you require further aquatic physiotherapy sessions, you will be placed back on the waiting list. If you miss more than two appointments, it will be at your Physiotherapist's discretion whether further appointments will be provided.

**Please remember that you need to be committed to your aquatic physiotherapy (hydrotherapy) and that other patients are waiting for treatment.**

## Contact Information

**Physiotherapy Departments:**

- Wigan 0300 707 1113 wwl-tr.mskphysio-bostonhouse@nhs.net
- Platt Bridge 0300 707 1772 wwl-tr.mskphysio-bostonhouse@nhs.net
- Leigh 0300 707 1595 wwl-tr.leighphysio@nhs.net

All departments are available 08:00-16:00 Monday to Friday



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