



Arthritis NZ
Mateponapona
Aotearoa

Living well with arthritis

Water exercises for arthritis

Gentle exercises you can try at your local pool

Why exercise in water?



Water supports your body and reduces load through painful joints while providing gentle resistance for strength, flexibility and balance.

Start gently

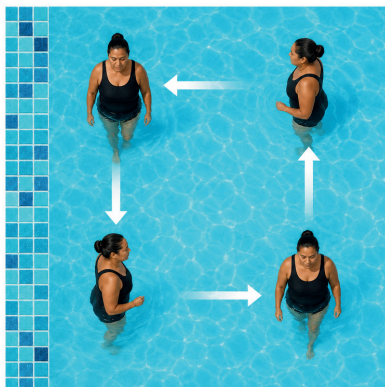


- Begin with 10-20 minutes.
- Move at a comfortable pace.
- Warm water may feel easier on stiff joints.

1 Water walking

Walk forwards, backwards and sideways through chest-deep water.

Try: 10 steps in each direction.

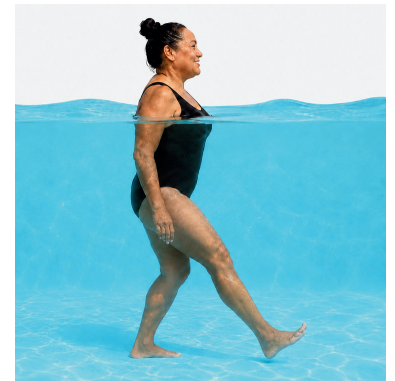


- ✓ Improves mobility
- ✓ Builds confidence
- ✓ Warms up muscles
- ✓ Helps balance

2 Heel jacks

Step one heel forward while bending the supporting knee. Alternate legs.

Repeat: 10-15 each side.



Targets: Hips, knees and ankles

3 Rocking horse

Shift your weight forwards and backwards between each leg.

Repeat: 10-15 times.



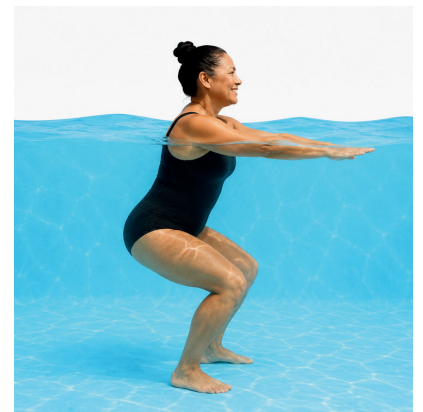
- ✓ Improves balance
- ✓ Helps walking confidence
- ✓ Strengthens legs
- ✓ Builds strength and keeps you moving

4 Squats

Stand with feet hip-width apart.

Slowly bend your knees before standing back up.

Repeat: 10-15 times.



Hold the pool rail if needed.

Continued on page 2 →



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5 Calf Raises

Rise onto your toes then slowly lower.

Repeat: 10–15 times.



✓ Helps strengthen ankles and calves.

6 Hip and Knee Flexion

Lift one knee towards hip height.

Lower slowly.

Alternate legs.

Repeat: 10–15 each side.



Targets: Hips, knees and ankles

7 Shoulder Raises

Raise your arms forwards or out to the side through the water.

Lower slowly.

Repeat: 10–15 times.



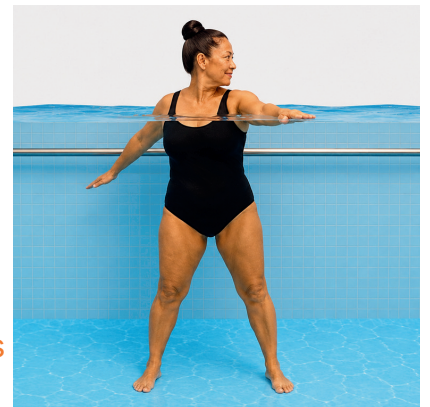
✓ Great for shoulder mobility.

8 Trunk Rotation

Stand tall with arms out on the water.

Gently rotate your shoulders one way then the other.

Repeat: 10 times each direction.



✓ Helps improve spinal movement

Finish with...



Walk slowly around the pool for 2–3 minutes before getting out.



Listen to your body

Everyone's arthritis is different. Mild muscle tiredness can be normal, but sharp pain is not. Your joints shouldn't become significantly more painful or swollen after exercise. If symptoms increase for more than 24 hours, reduce the intensity or duration next time. Move at your own pace. Every little bit of movement counts.



References

Darlow B, Perry M, Chapple C (2013)
Water based exercise for people with arthritis. University of Otago and Arthritis NZ.