

# MSA Hydrotherapy

Spring

2004

## MSA Hydrotherapy Classes

Hydrotherapy continues to be the exercise of choice by the physicians who care for those with Multiple Sclerosis. In addition to being essential to general health and well-being, exercise helps manage many multiple sclerosis (MS) symptoms (National Multiple Sclerosis Society [NMSS] 2003). Water exercise in particular is proving to be an effective path to functionality.

In our one hour program, participants are encouraged to work to their maximum potential. The exercises are performed in shoulder depth water. We do a series of exercises, which address the major symptoms of MS. These include:

### **Spasticity and contractures:**

Water's gentleness aids in relaxing and lengthening muscles. This can reduce spasticity, a condition in which certain muscles are continuously contracted, causing stiffness or tightness (NINDS 2003). Our group exercises emphasize the areas most susceptible to contracture, such as the pectorals, hamstrings,

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To register for  
Hydrotherapy Programs  
Call the  
Multiple Sclerosis Association

at 206.633.2606 or  
Harriet Ott 425-830-7746

Fees are adjusted to income levels

## Get into the Water... for the Health of it?

As the weather gets warmer you may be more likely to get into the water. At the lake or in the pool, even just standing in water is good for your health. When we are immersed in water to shoulder depth, our blood circulation increases, decreasing swelling in our extremities. In addition, our blood pressure decreases, and, as a result, our body systems don't have to work as hard.

To understand how this works, we need to reach back into our memory banks and remember the physics of fluids. Pascal, Archimedes and Newton are the experts on the effects of fluids. Pascal's Law, better known to some of us as "hydrostatic pressure" is most responsible for the increased body functions from just simple immersion. "Hydrostatic pressure" is defined as the pressure exerted by the molecules of fluid upon an immersed body, this pressure being equal on all the surface areas. When we get into the water, without the force of gravity pulling down on our systems, but instead pushing equally in all directions, our blood can move easily, our heart pumps more efficiently, and we can breath in and out with less effort.

**So Get into the water for the health of it!**

calves, thighs, buttocks, groin and the back.

**Balance:** Standing upright in the water places constant demands on the body's proprioceptive system, which detects movement and balance changes and adjusts accordingly. Water's movement around the body triggers this system to respond, forcing the muscles supporting the trunk to maintain an upright position. Again we do many exercises in this program, which will help the participant with balance challenges.

**Lower Extremity Weakness,** is the most common symptom of MS. Our classes offer many exercises to strengthen the lower extremity, using either the resistance of the water or aquatic equipment.

**Adaptions** to exercises are offered to challenge the variety of abilities within the group. Our pools are accessible to those living in wheel chairs and our staff is trained to help in transfers and pool entry. Best of all participants do not need to know how to swim to get the benefits of this program.

**Inactivity** in people with or without MS can result in numerous risk factors associated with coronary heart disease (NMSS 2003). In addition, inactivity can lead to muscle weakness; decreased bone density, with increased risk of fracture; and inefficient breathing. Working in the water has proven to be an excellent way to introduce the benefits of exercise to people with MS.

**Join up with one of our  
Hydrotherapy programs  
Today!**

**Pools where MSA  
Hydrotherapy groups are  
offered.**

<b>Fircrest Pool, Shoreline</b>	Tuesdays 10:30
<b>Bellevue Aquatic Center</b>	Tuesdays 1:00
<b>Kent Pool</b>	Tuesdays 1:00
<b>Evergreen Pool, Burien</b>	Fridays noon

**Six Reasons to Choose  
Hydrotherapy  
For Your Exercise Program!**

1. **Water** helps reduce pressure on joints and weak extremities. Allowing weakened body parts to move more freely in the water.
2. **Aquatics** exercise helps to increase body awareness and tolerance of exercise is greatly increased.
3. **Aquatic** therapy increases blood supply to muscle, and circulation of blood to all areas , which will help to reduce spasticity.
4. **Water** improves mobility and flexibility. The water has a massaging effects which allows muscles to relax, thus helping to relieve pain and increase movement.
5. **Structured** activity increases socialization and decreases a person's sense of isolation.
6. **Due** to the physical properties of water people can exercise and move in ways not possible on land, which can enhance overall feelings of well-being .

**What participants say about  
MS Hydrotherapy classes**

**"Every** muscle gets moved and exercised during these classes."... *Lois*

**"I move** better after an hour in the water".... *Diane*

**"I have** made new friends".. *Brenda*

**"This** class is a therapeutic workout which gives me improved mobility, increased flexibility and a place to network with others in a similar situation".... *Dave*

**"My walking** is more steady"... *Mary*

**-"Being stuck** in a chair is the pits! In the water, I can walk (without falling or stumbling). It's fantastic!! "..... *Lisa*

**-"Water for the Body,** Friendship for the Mind! Hydrotherapy is a positive."... *Sharon*