



You've got to be in it to swim it!

Swimming is a great activity for improving your health and wellbeing whatever your level of fitness. Here we explain the many benefits of taking a dip, so you can be sure to make a splash this summer!

1. It involves all your major muscle groups

All the major muscles are engaged when you go swimming giving you a full body workout. Using a variety of different strokes will maximise the number of muscles used. You don't need to pound the lanes to feel the benefit; a gentle swim is just fine to start with. Walking in the pool or doing aqua aerobics are great alternatives.

2. It's a great workout for your heart

Swimming on a regular basis has been shown to have many cardiovascular benefits including reduced blood pressure and a lower heart rate.

3. It boosts metabolism to give you more energy

Swimming for a recommended 30 minutes three times per week also raises your metabolism, giving you an energy boost.

4. It's gentle on joints

Water supports up to 90 per cent of the body's weight, making it a great activity for people who can't engage in high-impact exercise such as running,

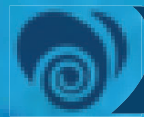
because of joint problems or heavy limbs caused by lymphoedema. The Arthritis Foundation recommends finding the stroke that is comfortable for your joints, and suggests using swimming aids such as kickboards and pull-buoys to help you to modify strokes if needed.

5. It has great mental health benefits

A light swim for just 30 minutes three times a week can have a huge positive impact on your mental wellbeing. Swimming has been proven to reduce stress, anxiety and depression, and improve general mood and sleep patterns. It only takes a gentle swim to feel the benefits.

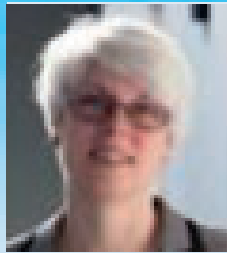
6. It's a calorie cruncher!

Swimming is one of the most effective ways to burn calories. A gentle swim can burn over 200 calories in just half an hour, more than double that of walking. If you are still finding it a struggle, consider your technique; you may benefit from a couple of lessons to polish up your technique to improve your efficiency.



Alison Hopkins, Chief Executive of Accelerate CIC advises:

'Swimming is an excellent and important way of keeping fit. It helps all aspects of mobility and lymphatic drainage. However, some open wounds will prevent this activity as do many compression bandage regimens because of the reliance on others to apply. However, if you wear hosiery, a leg ulcer should not necessarily stop you! If you have a small ulcer, obtain a simple film and pad dressing that is waterproof. Apply before your swim so it is fresh and adheres well. Remove after your swim and redress with your usual dressing. If you have wide spread ulcers or erosions we would caution against swimming as an activity until clear. It may be beneficial to swim wearing your compression garment to maximise the benefits of exercise. Keep a spare one for this purpose, as the fabric may be damaged by chlorine.'



Swimming for success

Swimming programmes for every ability and apps to track your progress are available for free online.

[www.swimbritain.co.uk/
preparation/training-programmes](http://www.swimbritain.co.uk/preparation/training-programmes)

Tips for swimming success

Convinced of the benefits? Now you just need to start. A common problem is the equivalent of trying to run before you can walk! Remember that training in water is different to land training. The lying down position in the water means your cardiovascular system and muscles have to adapt to the new way of working so go easy and build up to your target gradually.

To maximise the benefits of your workout and to stop you getting bored, swim using different strokes, and at different intensities. Couple this with a warm up and cool down and before you know it, your 30 minutes will be up! There are lots of free swimming programmes available online to give you guidance and goals to work towards (see above). If you are keen but a little shy, check out the timetable at your local pool. There may be special male-only and female-only sessions timetabled which you may prefer. Consider swimming as a great way to exercise for a lifetime. 