



Aquatic Therapy Facts & Quick Tips

The natural properties of the water provide dozens of ways to facilitate and promote strengthening, balance, and general mobility. Positive multisystem impacts can also lead to improved endurance and speech production. Here are some of the basics!

Buoyancy

Buoyancy is the upward thrust of the water. This means that when sitting or standing in the water, you are supported in a way that encourages you to remain upright. At the same time, should you lose your balance, the buoyancy of the water slows your fall, allowing increased time to recover, and thus, develop better balance reactions over time.

Activities to try:

- *Go Fish* can be played in sitting or standing. Using a net or a bucket, have your child fish for floating toys that are within and just outside of their arm's reach (so that they have to lean a little bit).
- *Treasure Hunt* is great way to help with visual scanning, sensory input, balance, and strengthening! Have your child sit or stand and try to retrieve sinker toys from the step, if sitting, or bottom of the pool if standing, using their foot. They can hold onto a pool noodle, your hand, or the wall (slowly reducing from a full hand to one finger) for balance.

Resistance

The viscosity, or thickness, of the water provides ample opportunity for creating resistance to build strength. Simply walking through the water provides resistance not present on land.

Activities to try:

- *Red light, green light* and calling out unpredictable *direction changes* (left, right, forward, backward) will help develop strength and balance control as well as facilitate improved motor planning. Simply walking at different speeds in different levels of water will provide also several challenges.
- Splashing from the top of the water and from a bit deeper will not only promote arm strengthening, but will also facilitate core activation and balance control. Even sitting at the edge of the pool and kicking their feet in the water will provide a strengthening opportunity for your child.

Hydrostatic pressure

Hydrostatic pressure is the force placed on the body by the surrounding water. The deeper the water, the greater the pressure. This force is beneficial for circulation and breath control which can impact speech and cardiovascular endurance.

Activities to try:

- Sitting or standing in chest deep water, have your child blow on a floating toy to see how far they can move it along the surface of the water. Bobbing up and down in the water while coordinating breathes is also a great way to promote breath control. This can be done by going under the water or not.