

**Original Definition:**

Aquatic physical therapy includes, but is not limited to, the rehabilitation, prevention, and overall wellness of a wide patient population. These patients, ranging from infants to the elderly can benefit from safe and effective physical therapy intervention in the aquatic environment, addressing neurologic, orthopedic, and other conditions. Aquatic physical therapy employs unique protocols but may also include swimming mechanics in conjunction with specific treatment techniques. Aquatic Physical Therapy must be supervised and or performed by a licensed physical therapist. Although various kinds of aquatic environments are utilized to perform these specific treatment techniques, Aquatic Physical Therapy is not a modality, but a procedure requiring specific skill and training to implement the aquatic techniques correctly.

**Definition:**

- Treatment time with therapeutic exercises in the water utilizing supine, prone, vertical, and /or reclined positions
- Utilization of specific evaluation, treatment techniques with a plan and goals
- Supervised and/or performed by licensed physical therapists
- Aquatic physical therapy is a procedure, not a modality
- Aquatic physical therapy is not just swimming or water walking, but may include various movements of these activities to obtain specific functional therapeutic goals

**Marilyn Moffat's Definition:**

Aquatic Physical Therapy is the skilled practice of physical therapy in an aquatic environment by a physical therapist or by a physical therapist assistant who is under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist. Aquatic Physical Therapy includes but is not limited to treatment, rehabilitation, prevention, health, wellness and fitness of patient/client populations in an aquatic environment with or without the use of assistive, adaptive, orthotic, protective, or supportive devices and equipment.

The buoyancy, support, and accommodating resistance of aquatic environments enhance exercise and functional training for patients/clients across the age span with musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular/pulmonary, and integumentary diseases, disorders, or conditions.

Aquatic Physical Therapy interventions are designed to improve or maintain aerobic conditioning/endurance, balance, coordination and agility, body mechanics and postural stabilization, flexibility, gait and locomotion, relaxation, and muscle strength, power, and endurance.