



AQX AquaNatal* Recommendations for Aqua Fitness Instructors:

Do more of these things...

- **Anchor or unweight movements in chest deep water:** take out the bounce to reduce joint stress and discomfort of breasts / abdomen.
- Frequently remind people to breathe and utilize “power posture”: *be long and strong*.
- Encourage participants to concentrate on their alignment and to move with good technique and core control throughout class.
- Watch closely and ask participants whether they are comfortable with exercise choices, ie: are they working hard enough or too hard?
- Provide alternatives for any uncomfortable or unsuitable exercises (as bellies and chests grow larger, they can limit some movements).
- Less fit participants should do fewer repetitions, especially when first starting aqua fitness.
- Teach (in warm up) and remind participants throughout class, how to *adjust* aquatic resistance to suit their needs: movement speed, range, and surface area factors (lever length, hand shape and orientation to direction of movement).
- Watch for stabilizer muscles being overused (ie: lifting of shoulders, tightening of neck or low back muscles). If alignment is lost, the potential for discomfort increases.
- Take a break between exercises if too fatigued; sip water, stretch, breathe deeply.
- Stretch and relaxation exercises can be done to comfortable end range (ligaments are looser). Pay attention to joint comfort throughout class.

Avoid or do less of these things...

- **Treating Aquanatal participants as though they are ill or unfit.** Pregnancy is not an illness; pre/post natal participants may be very fit and capable of exercise at a high intensity.
- **Avoid** higher intensity exercise in warm / therapeutic pools or hot environments ($\geq 88^{\circ}\text{F}$ / 31°C).
- **Using hand-held equipment** – joints are more vulnerable during and after pregnancy.
- **Moving too quickly** – allow time to stay anchored / grounded / unweighted and move with good technique.
- **Overuse of hip flexors** – repetitive knees up marching, tucks, cross-over marches and seated or piked positions all load muscles of the low back, possibly aggravating back pain.
- **Avoid bouncing and propulsive movements:** only very fit participants should consider doing propulsion. We recommend only using propulsive movements in deep water.
- **Avoid moving long levers at high speed:** joints are looser during and after pregnancy. Therefore, **DO** protect joints from strain / injury.
- **Avoid dehydration / low blood sugar.** **DO** encourage a light snack before class and sipping water throughout and after class (especially important when breast feeding).
- **Avoid hot tubs / saunas** or overheating while exercising.
- **Avoid pointing the toes:** especially in deep water or suspended. Cramps in the feet and toes are more common in this population.
- **Avoid sudden direction changes** or moving too quickly because these put more stress on the joints especially. **DO** move at slower speeds ($\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ tempo) for smoother transitions.

*AquaNatal training considers exercise in the childbearing year: pre-natal to ≥ 3 months post natal.