

## Upper body – joint mobility and strength

These water-based exercises are recommended by Arthritis NZ to help with a variety of conditions. It should not hurt to do these exercises, but it is OK to feel your joints and muscles work. See your general practice team or physiotherapist if your pain or movement gets worse from doing these exercises.

Tell the pool staff and see your general practice team if you feel unwell while doing these exercises.

Repeat the movements in sets of 10 to 15 repetitions.

If the exercise uses one limb at a time, do a full set on that side before changing to the other limb.

If you want to improve your joint mobility, you can use the **EASIER** form. To increase your muscle strength, you can use the **HARDER** form.

### Shoulder flexion/extension

- Stand with your feet a hip width apart and your hands at your sides.
- Turn your hands so your thumbs point toward your hips.
- Raise one arm forwards and the other arm backwards.

**EASIER:** 1. Turn your hands so your thumbs point forward.  
2. Place a float around your wrists to help movement. 3. Move your arms in one direction at a time.

**HARDER:** 1. Squat more deeply in the water. 2. Place paddles on your hands. 3. Move faster.



### Shoulder abduction

- Stand with your feet a hip width apart and your hands at your sides.
- Raise your arms out to the side keeping your thumbs pointed forwards.
- Return your arms to your side.

**EASIER:** 1. Turn your hands so your thumbs point forward.  
2. Place a float around your wrists to help movement. 3. Move your arms in one direction at a time.

**HARDER:** 1. Squat more deeply in the water. 2. Place paddles on your hands. 3. Move faster.



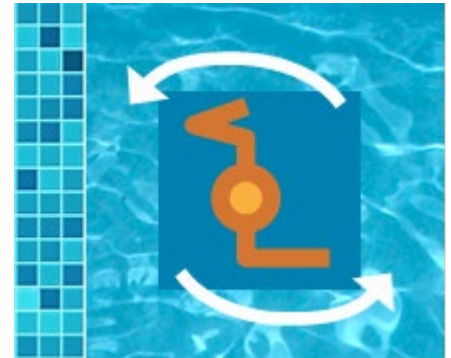
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### Surface push/pulls

- Stand with your feet a hip width apart.
- Push one arm forward on the water surface while pulling the other arm backwards.
- Swap arms.

**EASIER:** 1. Place floats around your wrists to support your hands on the water surface.

**HARDER:** 1. Place paddles on your hands. 2. Move faster. 3. Hold a flutter board upright in both hands and move both arms at the same time.



### Trunk rotation

- Stand with your feet a hip width apart.
- Lift your arms out to the side with your hands on the water surface.
- Twist your shoulders to face one way, then the other.
- Rotate your head in the opposite direction to exercise your neck.

**EASIER:** Place floats under your hands to support your arms.

**HARDER:** 1. Place your hands just below the surface and push against the water then twisting. 2. Place paddles on your hands. 3. Move faster.



*Adapted with permission from Darlow B, Perry M, Chapple C (2013) Water based exercise for people with arthritis. University of Otago and Arthritis New Zealand. This manual was produced as part of a joint project between Arthritis New Zealand and the School of Physiotherapy, University of Otago. Further information and advice about managing arthritis is available free by calling an arthritis educator 0800-663-463 or visiting [www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz). Last reviewed February 2024.*