



# Just add water: stay safe, move better, feel well

Being by the water is an instant mood elevator. It can be a pool, lake, river or ocean—even a bath can have an impact on some people. Whether we're conscious of it or not, water can calm the body down through its effect on the parasympathetic nervous system.<sup>1</sup> There is literal science behind why people like the water—we cannot get away from it.

However, enjoying the water and its surroundings requires planning, whether you're a swimmer, boater or prefer to stay on land.

## Prepare for the sun

Being outside can be wonderful, but too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light can damage skin cells. For the highest level of protection, consider:<sup>2</sup>



Staying in  
the shade



Wearing light-weight,  
long-sleeved shirts and pants



Wearing a  
wide-brimmed hat



Protecting your eyes  
with sunglasses

The most important way to protect yourself is to wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen every day, year-round, cloudy and cool days included. Apply it to any exposed skin and reapply every two hours, especially if you are active or in the water. Any product you use should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, but higher numbers indicate more protection.

## Dress for visibility

Drowning is the top cause of death for children aged one to four years. For children under age five, 85% of drowning fatalities happen in home pools or hot tubs.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing can replace watching kids closely and always staying near them when they are in or around water. Often, there are no cries for help or splashing when a child is in distress. The faster a child, or anyone in the water, can be seen, the faster they can be saved.

The color of a swimsuit matters—the brighter the better. Neons or brights like pink, orange, yellow or green are more visible than colors that blend with the water.<sup>4</sup> And if possible, choose suits that contain ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) sun protection.



## Exercise efficiently

Swimming and water workouts are good for your body and mental health. Water workouts are easy on your joints and offer resistance that can help build strength. They can also improve heart health, reduce stress and improve your endurance.<sup>5</sup> Water's unique properties can even elevate your mood.<sup>6</sup>

If swimming laps or distance is not for you, try these variations:<sup>7, 8</sup>



**Water walking or jogging:** Start in waist-high water and work up to chest-high depth. Walk 10-20 steps forward and then backward.

**Side stepping:** Take sideways steps across the pool without touching the wall. Go the same distance in each direction. Repeat two or three times.

**Deepwater bicycle:** Loop a pool noodle around the back of your body and rest your arms on top for support. Move your legs as if you are riding a bicycle. Continue for three to five minutes.

**Aqua aerobics:** Many public pools and gyms offer classes where you move around using things like noodles, kickboards, foam dumbbells and more.

**Now that you're protected and prepared, dive right in—the water's fine.**

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To sign up or learn more, go to [Go.Livongo.com/STATEOFIOWA/New](https://Go.Livongo.com/STATEOFIOWA/New).

Before starting any new exercise routine, talk to your healthcare provider to make sure it's safe.

<sup>1</sup><https://lifestylemedicine.stanford.edu/jumping-into-the-ice-bath-trend-mental-health-benefits-of-cold-water-immersion/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/skin-cancer/sun-safety/index.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/143/5/e20190850/37134/Prevention-of-Drowning?autologincheck=redirected>

<sup>4</sup><https://riseandshine.childrensnational.org/water-safety-tip-for-choosing-the-right-swimsuit-color/>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/aquatic-exercise/art-20546802>

<sup>6</sup><https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9714032/>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.chooset.com/health-tips/10-exercises-in-pool>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/basic-types-of-water-based-exercise>

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