

How swimming can help your dog.

(Lorna Colley, registered Canine Hydrotherapist [Well-dogs](#))



The benefits of swimming and moving in water are well known and have been used for centuries. Because of the increased resistance to movement, a 5 minute swim is said to be equivalent to about a 5 mile run. The buoyancy of water supports and lessens stress on the joints, encourages freer movement and provides a safe environment for exercise

Canine hydrotherapy is a complementary therapy which aids the recovery of many post operative procedures and can assist in the management of arthritis and degenerative joint disease. It is extremely beneficial for all dogs, helping to maintain optimum fitness levels and weight control and to improve quality of life for the elderly or infirm.

Hydrotherapy treatment or swims involve exercise in warm water and in a controlled manner with zero impact on the joints.

Although ponds and lakes may seem to be the option during the summer months, there is always the danger of submerged objects which may injure or entangle your dog. Dogs recovering from surgery or suffering from injury should never be allowed to swim in natural ponds for fear of infection. Cold water will not give the same therapeutic effects as water which is heated to 29 – 30 degrees and may cause some conditions to worsen, reducing blood flow to extremities and placing stress on the heart.

Warm water dilates the blood vessels, allowing an increased flow of oxygen, blood and nutrients to the muscles and joints and assists in the removal of waste products.

The action of the dog moving in water means that the muscles work harder due to the resistance of the water; joint range of movement is increased whilst movement is less painful for the dog in the weight free environment of the hydrotherapy pool.

Over time, the flexibility, range of movement and general fitness should improve, allowing the animal to move more freely and gain muscle mass which in turn will support joints, especially important for dogs suffering from hip or elbow dysplasia and cruciate repair.



Because hydrotherapy is a form of rehabilitation and physiotherapy, your dog may only receive this treatment with a signed referral form from your veterinary surgeon. For more information go to [Well-dogs Hydrotherapy Pool](#)

The benefits of hydrotherapy:

- Increased joint mobility
- Improved muscle mass and tone
- Reduced inflammation, pain, swelling and stiffness
- Improved cardiovascular fitness
- Improved circulation
- Assists weight loss
- Provides mental stimulation and improved mental wellbeing

Conditions and Injuries that are recommended to be treated with Hydrotherapy

[Well-dogs Hydrotherapy Pool](#)

Arthritis and Osteoarthritis

Arthritis is a degenerative joint disease causing pain and stiffness as a result of wear and tear to the joint. Osteoarthritis is the disease of the joints leading to inflammation, gradual loss of cartilage and calcification deposits within the joint. This can be a debilitating disease that can result in severe pain, swelling and lameness. Swimming allows your dog to exercise the joint fully without the pain and extra damage which can be caused by weight

L.Colley Well-dogs Complementary Therapies, Hydrotherapy pool.

bearing. The extra range of movement allows encourages blood supply to the joints helping to increase the manufacture of joint fluids which lubricate the joint and decrease inflammation and thus pain.

Hip and Elbow Dysplasia

Dysplasia is characterised by the malformation or distorted appearance of the joint. The joint does not fit together properly and causes instability and often lameness, sometimes leading to osteoarthritis. Swimming helps to build muscle mass around the joint thus providing support and helping to slow degeneration of the joint or to support a repair carried out by a veterinary surgeon.

Cruciate Ligament Injuries

This kind of injury is often caused by trauma to the knee joint. The ligament can often tear due to twisting and turning during play or exercise. This injury can be repaired with surgery, and hydrotherapy is then a very effective way of rehabilitating the joint and building muscle mass.

OCD – Osteochondrosis Dessicans

This is a disease that is commonly seen in young dogs. It is the failure of cartilage development and involves a fragment of the surface of the joint breaking away and leaving the joint uneven and painful, leading to swelling and lameness. Swimming helps to build muscle mass around the joint thus providing support and helping to slow degeneration of the joint or to support a repair carried out by a veterinary surgeon.

Obesity

Being overweight can cause animals to become short of breath and exercise intolerant. It can also lead to diabetes, respiratory disease and many joint ailments. The excess weight puts great stress onto all the joints, making them stiff and sore. Hydrotherapy in this case, promotes weight loss and the ability to exercise in a weight free environment, encouraging an increase in fitness, flexibility and stamina.

CDRM – Chronic Degenerative Radiculomyelopathy

This disease can also be referred to as RM. It is a neurological disorder causing progressive wasting of the hind limbs, leading to eventual paralysis. It is most commonly seen in German Shepherds. Hydrotherapy can help build muscle mass to support the bone structures and improve strength and fitness, providing a higher quality of life for as long as possible. Sadly, this condition is not curable.

Hydrotherapy can also be used for many other conditions such as:

- Intervertebral disc disease
- Legge-calve Perthes Disease
- Luxating Patella
- Panosteitis
- Spondylosis deformans and soft tissue injuries

Please give me a call at [Well-dogs Hydrotherapy Pool](#) if you wish to discuss treatments for any of the above conditions, or if you fancy some fun in the pool with your dog!



Belle and Norah enjoying a fun swim with their owner.

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