**Work Out in the Water! Deep Water Aerobics at the YMCA**

Exercising in water has so many benefits. Buoyancy allows you to perform exercises you may find a lot more difficult to do on land and the resistance it provides makes it easier to tone your muscles. Water aerobics has the advantage of providing the cardiovascular workout you’d get in the gym while also improving muscle tone.

A deep water aerobic class like the one we have here at the YMCA of Beaufort County, is a low-impact way to tone your muscles and get your heart rate up. Because the class is done at the deep end of the pool, it can be difficult to execute the moves and tread water at the same time. A buoy belt, also called a float belt, is used to make the exercises easier and more effective.

While you should never take a deep water aerobics class if you can't swim, a buoy belt helps stabilize your body so you are less likely to go underwater. Even if you can swim, a buoy belt helps keep your head above the water, which gives you the ability to move more freely to execute the deep water moves. If you don't have to use all your energy just to stay above water, you get a more effective and safe workout.

**There's No Resistance Like Water Resistance**

Exercising underwater is an effective way to tone muscles and build endurance. When you exercise in deep water, the water provides resistance (12 to 14 % more resistance than in air), which forces your muscles to work harder. A buoy belt stabilizes you and keeps your body in an upright position, which makes it easier to do a range of movements that target your arms, back and abdominal muscles. A buoy belt is particularly beneficial for the muscles in your legs. The belt keeps you afloat so you can gain full range of motion with your legs, which enhances the muscle-building benefits. Plus, you can exercise with the water at upper chest level, which means your upper torso and arms are being toned, which is the same as when you swim.

**Defying Gravity**

The effect of gravity on your muscles is quite different in the water, and this is a real bonus. On land, gravity pulls your muscles in one direction, whereas when you're in water, gravity meets resistance to work on your muscles from two directions. So not only does this help tone and shape the muscles, it works on endurance and strength, although if one of your aims is to increase muscle strength, you should complement water aerobics with weight-bearing exercise on land, according to the International Fitness Association.

**Low Impact**

Deep water aerobics is a low-impact way to exercise that doesn't put stress on your joints, and a buoy belt makes it easier to execute the moves without placing strain on the body. Exercising in the water reduces the stress placed on your muscles and bones, as well. Water aerobics isn't likely to leave you with sore muscles either, according to the American Council on Exercise. Individuals with back problems
and arthritis, as well as those recovering from injury can work out in the water with a buoy belt for a reduced risk of injury and strain.

**Improves Flexibility**

Working out in deep water can improve your flexibility. A buoy belt keeps you upright and above water so you can do a range of stretches that you might not be able to do on land or in shallow water. Because the buoyancy of the water reduces your body weight by 90 percent, you are able to move in ways you otherwise wouldn't be able to, according to the American Council on Exercise. As you move in new ways, you make your body work harder than it would on land, which increases your flexibility and your range of motion.

Deep water aerobics classes at the YMCA of Beaufort County are currently held on Tuesday and Thursday at 10 am AND 5:30pm, as well as at 9 am on Saturday.

Lastly, always consult a qualified medical professional before beginning any exercise program!

*References: Healthy Living at AZ Central, Livestrong.com, American Council on Exercise*