

Exercising the Lower Body Muscles in Water by Katherine Preston



In summer, people often use their backyard pools for exercising. With proper form/ technique, water exercises can deliver an excellent workout! Let's focus on two, effective movements done in chest- deep water for working the major lower- body muscles.

Note: Prior to exercising, please consult with a M.D., regarding your health status, if necessary.

The Rocking Horse is performed vertically and engages primarily the quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteals, hip flexors and abdominals (stabilizers). Stand with legs hip- width apart, raise your extended right leg out in front and then lower it to the start position. Following, lift your extended left leg in a posterior direction; maintain a long spine and a slight, forward lean **from the hip flexors**. Return your left leg to the start position. Alternate leg lifts for a maximum count of 32 beats (to music) or 8- 15 reps per leg before switching your lead leg. For less intensity: perform this movement with a light bounce and less height. For greater intensity, lift legs to hip height in an anchored position or in a suspended position in deep water. When done in the latter, both legs must be lifted/ lowered simultaneously to avoid any hyper- extension of the lower back. Added upper body muscle engagement occurs when the arms are integrated. When the front leg is lifted, both extended arms are brought downwards to your sides and/ or beyond. When the front leg is lowered and the back leg is lifted, both arms are simultaneously lifted upwards, remaining under the water's surface. For less to greatest intensity, use a "slice"/ "fist"/ "flat" hand position.

The Pendulum is performed with lateral limb motion in a standing / vertical position and employs primarily the adductors, abductors, hip flexors, gluteals and abdominals (stabilizers). Raise/ lower laterally, first your right leg, then your left leg. Repeat the movement of alternating lateral leg lifts for a maximum count of 32 beats (to music) or 8- 15 reps/ leg. Intensity can be determined by i) the height of the lift, ii) the movement's speed, iii) the delivery choice for muscle training purposes: light bounce (good), propulsion (better), anchored (best) or suspended (best). Also, upper body muscles are employed when integrating lateral (extended) arm lifts with varying hand positions (slice/ fist/ flat). Remember to employ the opposite arm- leg combination to assure greater stability when using a light bounce, anchored or propulsion. When suspended in deep water, both legs must be laterally raised/ lowered simultaneously in order to avoid spinal misalignment. Likewise, both arms must lift/ lower together- **in opposition to the legs**. In deep water, this movement now resembles jumping jacks.

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