



Swimming for Fitness, Conditioning, Rehabilitation and Sport

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Swimming has many benefits for dogs who enjoy the water. Swimming is an all-around healthy activity for dogs. It provides everything from exercise, physical and mental stimulation, and a release/outlet for all the energy stores. For most dog owners, the clear and obvious benefit obtained from swimming your dog is exercise and burning off some of that extra energy that seems to be in endless quantities in their bodies.

Top 10 reasons to swim your dog:

- **Faster recovery from surgery or injury**
- **Decrease pain and inflammation**
- **Relieve stress**
- **Help combat the aging process by increasing mobility, decreasing arthritis and overall body stiffness**
- **Weight loss/management**
- **Improve body condition**
- **Improve physical performance**
- **Increase stamina**
- **Provides/Improves cardio vascular fitness**
- **Mental stimulation**

As with any fitness or conditioning program, you should begin your dog slowly and increase the exercise over time. In the beginning, don't be surprised if your dog only swims for a few minutes. Gradually, as their fitness and stamina improves, they will be able to swim longer and further with minimal rests.

Generally, indoor dog pools have a water temperature of around 85 degrees. At this temperature, dogs' muscles "warm up" quickly, aiding in relaxation and assisting blood flow. It also helps to reduce muscle spasms and improves range of motion.

For working and performance dogs, such as Search and Rescue, police, agility, tracking, just to mention a few, swimming helps to improve stamina, mental well-being and focus.

For dogs with medical conditions that restrict or do not allow concussive (force or impact) exercise, swimming can be very beneficial to the dogs' overall health and recovery. For example, with an orthopedic injury or surgery, it's very important pre-surgery to build up the supporting muscle(s). Because extensive walking and/or running are not suitable forms of exercise, controlled swimming enables supported, non-concussive exercise to build up the surrounding muscles and tissues.

After surgery, once the site has had the appropriate amount of time to heal and your veterinarian has cleared your dog for exercise, swimming provides weightless activity to improve joint movement, increase circulation and build supporting muscle. Research has shown that swimming in warm water can significantly decrease recovery time from surgery and injuries as well as decrease pain. To read more check out:

<https://animalwellnessmagazine.com/warm-water-therapy-case-study/>

Nowadays, swimming is not just for the great outdoors! Many canine organizations and businesses have begun incorporating indoor dog pools and swim programs into their daily operations. These pools are widely used for dog birthday parties, group "dog friend" swims, water sports training, building a confident swimmer: guidance and tips, as well as a variety of health, postsurgical recovery and fitness opportunities, as mentioned above.

For additional information and to learn more about swimming programs, water-sports and hydro activities for your dog, please visit the following websites/pages:

- 4 Paws Adrift Water Training Club @ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/263492593727704/>
- What a Good Dog @ <http://www.whatagooddoginc.com/swim>
- Marty's Place @ <https://marty'splace.org/dog-swim/>
- Canine Water Sports @ www.caninewatersports.com
- Always Helpful Veterinary Services @ <http://www.alwayshelpfulveterinaryservices.com/>

****Please feel free to contact us at 908.892.4709 and visit some of the above referenced links for more information on how to get your dog swimming confidently and happily. Winter and early spring are especially difficult to find outdoor water venues, as the weather is unpredictable and water and air temperatures in the Great Outdoors have not warmed up enough. ****

A few parting thoughts, as to the benefits of swimming your dog:

- Aids in decreasing the pain associated with arthritis, hip and elbow dysplasia, and orthopedic surgery. Helps improve quality of life after stroke, paralysis and muscle degeneration.
- In the case of an overweight dog, on land exercises can be uncomfortable on bones and joints due to the impact or concussive force exerted. Swimming provides a balanced form of supported exercise. Warm water temperatures and a controlled environment will

allow gradual energy and an increase in stamina. In turn your dog will burn calories, improve their metabolic rate and be able to exercise in a controlled, low stress, comfortable, climate-controlled environment.

Denise Grimm is the owner and training director of Search Response K9, co-founder of 4 Paws Adrift – water training club, former president and co-founder of NJ Rescue and Recovery K9 SAR Unit. She was a certified FEMA and SUSAR K9 Search Specialist with Pennsylvania Task Force One, Maryland Task Force One and New Jersey Urban SAR Task Force One, as well as an evaluator and instructor. She is a graduate of Kansas State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science and Industry and earned her certification as a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Assistant from Canine Rehabilitation Institute. She was appointed, Water Sports judge by Canine Water Sports in 2011.