



**RANCHO LOS AMIGOS NATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER**  
Occupational Therapy and Recreation Therapy Department

**RANCHO LOS AMIGOS**  
NATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

<b>SUBJECT: Aquatic Therapy Program</b>	<b>Policy No.:</b>	<b>319</b>
	<b>Revised:</b>	<b>August 2022</b>
	<b>Supersedes:</b>	<b>October 17, 2018</b>
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**PURPOSE:**

To provide discipline specific therapy in an aquatic environment while utilizing interventions appropriate to OT/RT clinical practice for the purpose of achieving patient centered goals.

**DEFINITION(S):**

To provide patients with an opportunity to participate in an aquatic program which promotes the following beneficial properties/outcomes:

1. Outcomes:

- To improve circulation
- To increase respiration
- To decrease muscle tone/tension
- To decrease pain
- To increase range of motion
- To increase balance
- To increase trunk stability/control
- To increase functional mobility
- To increase perceptual/spatial benefits
- To increase morale
- To increase cardiovascular and aerobic exercise
- To explore new healthy leisure activities and options

**POLICY:**

Rancho Aquatic Therapy Program is a daily program held at the Don Knabe Wellness and Aquatic Center. The services to be included in this program are as follows: Acute Neurorehabilitation, Spinal Cord Injury, Adult Brain Injury, and Pediatrics Services. Inpatient Occupational and Recreation Therapy staff will initiate inpatient participation both independently and collaboratively for inpatient services. Outpatient Occupational and Recreation Therapy staff will initiate outpatient participation for outpatient services. Both disciplines will be responsible to determine patient participation based on patient driven goals, functional status and therapy team recommendations.

**PROCEDURE:**

Patients with a variety of impairments may be appropriate for aquatic therapy. Primary therapist will evaluate and determine if aquatic therapy is a beneficial and appropriate treatment modality for the patient.

1. Suitable patients for Aquatic Therapy:

- Impaired gait
- Impaired balance
- Postural dysfunction
- Motor control deficits
- Restricted range of motion



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**PROCEDURE (CONT'D):**

1. Suitable patients for Aquatic Therapy (Cont'd):

- Restricted weight bearing
- Edema
- Pain
- Hypertonicity
- Cardiovascular dysfunction
- Pulmonary dysfunction
- Tissue healing (closed wounds)
- Sensory integration dysfunction
- Stress/Pain management difficulty
- Inpatients: Patients with isolation indicated as “**Standard**” are permitted in the pool. This includes permission for patients with MRSA in nares. See revised Infection Control Policy (IC103F).
- Outpatients: Patients with isolation indicated as “**N/A**” are permitted in the pool. All outpatient encounters will have the “N/A” on the isolation status of the banner bar in ORCHID.

**Note:** For patients with open wounds or active infections, regardless of isolation status, participation in Aquatic Therapy is a contraindication per the current policy.

2. Contraindications - No patient will be allowed to participate in the Aquatic Therapy program with the following conditions:

- Open wounds or wounds with sutures/staples that are not fully healed/closed
- Colostomy bag
- Foley catheter
- PICC line
- Tracheostomy
- Bowel or bladder incontinence, diarrhea within 2 weeks, vomiting within 24 hours
- Any isolation precautions
- Febrile conditions
- Menstruation without internal protection
- Infectious or unidentifiable skin rashes or any active infection
- DVT without anticoagulant
- Uncontrolled seizures
- Active Eczema; Psoriasis; Sensitivity to pool chemical
- Communicable Diseases: Hep A/B/C (intact skin); Cryptosporidium; E. coli; Giardia; Shigella; MRSA; HIV (not-immunocompromised); Athletes Feet (wear shoes)
- Inpatients: Inpatients with other than “**Standard**” precautions are **NOT** permitted in the pool.

**Note:** For patients with open wounds or active infections, regardless of isolation status, participation in Aquatic Therapy is a contraindication per the current policy.



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3. Precautions:

- **Metabolic:** Dialysis; Renal Dysfunction; Diabetes; Pregnancy; Heat Sensitivity (MS)
- **Pulmonary:** Pulmonary Disease; COPD; Asthma; Bronchitis; Emphysema; Cystic Fibrosis
- **Cardiovascular:** Controlled HTN; DVT; Orthostatic; Hypotension; Cardiomyopathy; Myocarditis; MI (greater than 6 wks.)
- **Sensory/Vestibular:** Frequent ear infection; Vestibular Dysfunction; Poor Sensation/proprioception (wear shoes); Hearing impaired; Glasses/Contacts
- **Neurological:** Seizures with no recent activity; TBI; CVA; Autonomic Dysreflexia; Hypotonia
- **Orthopedic:** Maintain WB/ROM precautions, osteoporosis (increased potential for harm)

**ATTACHMENTS/FORMS:**

RTD\_OT\_RT 319.1 - Attachment A - Aquatic Therapy Program Use of Pool Guidelines

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References:

(Infection Control Policy & Procedure Infection Control No. IC103)