

Dealing with Pool Temperature



There is nothing constant when teaching Aquafit except the water will always be wet. As Aquafit instructors we deal with variations in water levels, temperatures, available space, equipment and participant abilities.

Temperature will always be a point of contention. The temperature will never please everyone if you share the pool with other activities especially at the same time. The Aquafit participants seem to think it is just a matter of turning up the thermometer for their class and then turning it down for everyone else. Temperature changes are not instant like the bath tub. Temperature changes also affect the chemical requirements.

Pool temperature depends on many variables:

Indoor versus outdoor pool, lake or maybe onboard a ship location of pool (condo, fitness centre, community centre, vacation resort, back yard, private club etc) time of day (in outdoor pools the water is much cooler in the morning and evenings) other programs using the pool and how much time is for aquafitness. If Aquafitness is 45 minutes a day and the pool is used by swimmers for 10 hours then there is a good chance the temperature will be closer to what the swimmers prefer.

Many instructors have learned that city pools are kept quite cool for the swimmers and the Aquafitness programs have to adapt to ensure their success in a cooler pool. Private pools may be warmer than recreational pools, because the owner keeps them at the temperature they prefer. Therapy pools are kept at therapeutic temperatures comfortable for people with musculoskeletal and/or neurological challenges whereby they are not able to generate body heat through vigorous movement.

As Aquafitness instructors we need to be flexible with our program design and class plan. You may intend to teach a particular style of class when you arrive, but the temperature might be too low for that style. Instructors need to be adaptable and change the class design quickly, from a warmer water style class to a colder style class. CALA training provides instructors with the skills and knowledge to custom design our programs to accommodate surprises in pool temperatures. The CALA library of moves together with knowledge about how to make the movement easier and harder enable us to create fabulous classes under all sorts of circumstances.

Educating the participants about how to adapt movements to suit cooler water pools, will make their experience more pleasant.

Following are useful ideas to share with participants to help them stay warm:

- wear a shower or bathing cap to keep body heat in, a base ball cap is also acceptable
- wear bike shorts or tights to keep the hip and thigh area warm

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- wear a fitted sleeve t-shirt or thermal top to keep the shoulders and arm pits covered
- and reduce cooling from evaporation (Clothing can be ordered through CALA)
- wear a wet suit or vest to help keep the body warmth in
- clothing, designed to keep participants warm, can be ordered through CALA or H2Owear

Instructor recommendations:

- Reduce the amount of travelling or eliminate it altogether. As the participant exercises the water immediately around the body is warmed up. If the participants stay in the same space, they remain in the water that they have warmed up.
- Keep the participants continually moving both their arms and legs so that the entire body generates energy, producing heat. If participants slow down or stop moving the legs or the arms, they will cool down quickly.
- Use lively music to motivate and inspire the participants to keep on moving. Keep the choreography creative with smooth transitions in order to take the participants mind off the water temperature.
- Refrain from showing concern when the water is cold. Tell the members they will be doing a class designed for cooler water class.
- Suggest the participants complete the stretch and relaxation part of the class in the sauna, hot tub, shower or at home. Some participants may choose to stay in the cooler water and do their stretching (not everyone feels the cold the same - what is cold to one is warm to another - age and health play a factor in how a participant reacts to the water temperature).
- If you are leading a therapeutic class, you may cancel the class because a cooler water class may cause more discomfort than healing.
- As instructors we are responsible for designing and leading a safe and effective class.
- Make the best decisions for your participants. Consider bringing your own thermometer to record the water temperature. Take time to understand why there are temperature fluctuations so that you are informed.

Facilities are all looking for ways to save money. Lowering the temperature of the pool even by 1degree can save big money. If participants are informed that this is the new temperature, they can prepare for it. Some participant may have to find another facility with warmer water. Others may prefer the cooler water temperature!