



Making a Splash

Water sports offer great fitness possibilities

BY SUE DEPASQUALE

Whether or not you literally want to take the plunge, there's a water sport for you. From flat-water kayaking to deep-water running, the options beyond swimming for getting fit in, on or near the water are as varied as the ripples on a lake. Of course, some aquatic pastimes offer more of a workout than others.

"People often ask me, 'What about jet skiing?'" says orthopedist Jonathan L. Chang, a sports medicine specialist at the University of California in Los Angeles. "It may be a lot of fun, but you're getting a limited amount of exercise because the vehicle is doing the work." Chang puts water skiing in this same category. "Though you get some resistance against your arms and legs, most people don't stay up long enough to get a great workout," he notes.

Far better, Chang says, are the water sports that offer aerobic conditioning while also building and toning muscle. Consider the following fitness opportunities:

Flat-Water Kayaking

Though flat-water kayaking may lack the sheer adrenaline rush of its white-water cousin, this tamer version offers an effective—and enjoyable—source of exercise. Whether you choose to explore a river or stream, alone or with a partner, you'll be sure to get a great upper body workout as you execute a forward stroke with your double-bladed paddle.

And your arms aren't all that will feel the burn. A good paddle stroke starts at the feet, according to Briana and Robert Finlay of Kayak Lake Mead, near Las Vegas. "The power then transmits up through your legs, butt and abdominal region, through your torso, and finally to the paddle shaft. You'll breathe hard and use your heart and lungs to move and use oxygen." Add the benefits of strengthened joints and improved flexibility, and it's clear, they say: "Kayaking is total body fitness."

The Finlays, who lead moonlight kayaking tours on the silvery waters of Lake Mead, also extol flat-water kayaking as a stress reducer. "Spending a few hours under the sky, on the water, watching the colors of your surrounding scenery ... is going to make anybody feel better and be happy."

Kayaking shells come in a wide variety of types, sizes and costs. Recreational kayaks, currently the best-selling variety on the market, offer a larger cockpit (for ease in getting in and out) and a wider beam for more stability on the water. At less than 12 feet, this variety is slower than longer boats, but lighter, easier to handle on the water, and less expensive—and it more easily attaches to the top of your car.

Rowing

Forget the image of a rowboat slowly circling a pond. If you're looking to take your water workout up a notch, then rowing may be your best bet. Running, biking, weight lifting, skiing ... none offers the complete body workout that rowing does—and without putting stress on your joints. Vigorous rowing will burn considerably more calories than kayaking (about 850 per hour vs. 500) and it's guaranteed to strengthen your back muscles.

Other pluses: Rowing is versatile (you can row indoors or out, in fair weather or foul, in a boat or on a rowing machine) and it's time efficient—it doesn't take long to complete a serious workout.

If you've never rowed outdoors before, don't expect to master the stroke overnight. Unlike kayaking with its freestanding paddle, rowing involves pulling on oars that have a mechanical connection to the boat. Whether you operate a rear-facing craft (often referred to as traditional rowing or sculling) or a forward-facing variety, it's not unusual to feel awkward at first, as you struggle to keep your balance while you pull. And be prepared to feel fatigue in your upper arms, forearms and legs at the outset; these muscles will need some time to build.

Many communities and universities now offer rowing facili-

ties where you can access and store a rowing shell, join a rowing club, and get instruction.

Deep-Water Running

What started during the 1980s as a way for athletes to maintain fitness while they were injured is rapidly evolving into a popular cross-training activity for the healthy and fitness-minded.

"Deep-water running provides a fantastic aerobic workout," says Chang, and because there's no stress on the joints, "it's particularly beneficial for those with knee or hip arthritis."

Whether you opt to do your aquatic running in a lake or a pool, you'll need water that is chest deep. And it's imperative to use a flotation device—there are several different styles of vests and belts now available specifically for deep-water running. The goal: to keep your body afloat while allowing you to perform a running motion with resistance on all sides.

If you want to further enhance your cardiovascular and strength-training workout, there are a number of hydro devices ("socks," "gloves" and dumbbells) that enable you to vary your effort and intensity.

Feel the Burn: The Calories You'll Expend ...

Calculated for a 150-pound person, exercising for 60 minutes

Kayaking: 340

Rowing (moderate): 476

Swimming/crawl (50 yds/min): 544

Water Polo: 680

Water-Skiing: 408

White-water Rafting: 340

Water Aerobics: 272

Surfing: 204



SOURCE: www.calorie-count.com/calories/activities/18.html

It can take a little practice to find the right running style underwater. Aim for short, quick strides and be sure not to "paddle"—keep a loosely closed fist and let your legs move you forward. And don't expect to get as far as you do on land—the water, of course, is there to hold you back. ■

The Sky Is The Limit!



The Right Connection™

Does your current vendor consider your quick coupling application 'non-standard'?

At Dixon Quick Coupling, we understand that every application is unique in some way and that a standard catalog offering is inflexible and static, not necessarily showing products that will meet the needs of your application. We bridge the gap between hydraulic and pneumatic applications with an increasing line-up of quick coupling products that are easily configurable to ensure you have the "Right Connection" for your specific application. When it comes to selecting the right combination of seals and body materials, the sky is the limit!

To ensure you have the Right Connection for your unique application, call 800-827-DIXON or visit www.dixonquickcoupling.com

www.dixonquickcoupling.com

Dixon Quick Coupling

532 Alameda Avenue, Chandler, AZ 85226

USA Sales and Technical Assistance:

800-827-0770 • 704-378-6755 • Fax: 800-836-0022 • 704-334-0002