

WHAT IS HYDROTHERAPY AND HOW IS IT USEFUL?

Hydrotherapy involves the use of water as a form of treatment for a variety of conditions including sensory processing disorders and autism. Hydrotherapy can stimulate the body and mind through gentle exercise in warm water which remains at a constant temperature.

THE BENEFITS OF HYDROTHERAPY

1. IT MAKES EXERCISE ACCESSIBLE

Exercise and physical activity are important for everyone. However, for those with specific abilities, that is not always possible due to factors including accessibility, motor impairments and feeling uncomfortable in certain environments.

Hydrotherapy is a great way for everyone to get involved in some light exercise. Pools provide freedom of movement therefore people who are normally in their seating systems, wheelchairs or sat down for the majority of the day, can really benefit from being in the water.

2. PHYSICAL PAIN CAN BE EASED IN THE WATER

As the water is nice and warm, it can decrease muscle tone and spasticity by effecting the neuro-muscular junctions. Water helps individuals to float and this can also really assist in the movement of the joints which may be uncomfortable for many outside of the water.

Similarly, physiotherapy can be difficult and painful for those with tight joints and muscles but in the water, stretching the muscles can be easier and users can have fun exercising too!

3. SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS CAN IMPROVE

Many people find it hard to socially connect and talk to others. Hydrotherapy sessions require communication and working with other people including peers in the same group or a therapist which allows social skills to develop naturally.

Aerobic exercise has also been proven to reduce negative behaviours in many. For example, those with autism can see a reduction in behaviours such as rocking, head-nodding and tapping. Those who have very limited movement or find it difficult to be vocal can use hydrotherapy to mobilise their arms and legs to direct and indicate preferences when in the water, allowing them to develop vital communication skills.

4. THE ABILITY TO CALM AND STIMULATE

For those who have sensory processing disorders, the feeling of water on the body is a great way to reduce stress and creating a soothing effect. Through specially designed activities, stimulation is easily achievable whilst still in this relaxed state. For example, retrieving various items that have been placed around the pool is the perfect way to stimulate a user whilst enabling them to move at their own pace.

Hydrotherapy pools use sensory equipment which helps to create an environment that is suited to the individuals using it entirely. Interactive features that use different colours, sound and lighting mean the user is able to react and be stimulated by their environment, as well as the water.