



together ■ everyone ■ achieves ■ more

Aquatic Therapy

Did you know? Children's Therapy TEAM offers the only warm-water pediatric therapy pools in Northwest Arkansas. Because Children's Therapy TEAM's pools were designed exclusively for therapeutic purposes, careful attention has been given to every aspect of the therapeutic setting. For example, by keeping the air temperature around the pools just one degree cooler than the water temperature, an optional transition to poolside therapy is ensured. When a child masters a movement or skill in the water, the therapist can immediately transition the child to poolside therapy for practice on a land surface.

Why is water temperature so important? A major function of a therapeutic pool is to relax muscles. Water must be warm in order to achieve this. A shivering, cold child simply will not be able to reap all the benefits that an aquatic setting should offer. This is why the water temperatures in Children's Therapy TEAM pools are within a therapeutic range of 92-94 degrees year-round.

Interested in Aquatic Therapy? Begin by talking to your therapist. They may be able to make a recommendation regarding whether water-based therapy may be a good fit for your child. You can also call Children's Therapy TEAM's referral coordinator (479-790-6612) to inquire about services.

Who qualifies for Aquatic Therapy?

Any child receiving therapy services from a Speech-Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist and/or Occupational Therapist may be eligible.

What about kids already receiving school-based therapy or therapy through another provider?

We happily collaborate with community therapists, both public and private. Introducing aquatic therapy as an add-on service while maintaining the child's current therapy offerings can be a great way to reach therapy goals more quickly.

Why choose aquatic therapy? There is a significant body of research supporting the use of aquatic therapy to help children achieve therapy goals. Here are a few of the unique advantages to water-based therapy.

- **Strengthening.** Water provides excellent resistance, so a child who struggles to meet strengthening and coordination goals on land may benefit from the freedom of movement that is possible in water-based therapy. The buoyancy of the water helps decrease the effect of gravity and allows the child to have more success with body weight movements and strengthening activities.
- **Support of Speech Production.** The hydrostatic pressure of water at chest-deep level provides resistance for strengthening the diaphragm, a major muscle involved in breathing for speech. Water is able to give more support to the trunk, head, and neck, thus offering better positioning for the jaw and tongue. This promotes improved feeding skills and facilitates more intelligible articulation. Speech therapists who regularly work in water report improved coordination for louder volume and sustained voicing.
- **Motivation.** Many children enjoy being in the water. It is motivating and natural for the child because they are having fun in the pool.

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- **Sensory Skills.** Is aquatic therapy a good fit if the child doesn't like being in the water? Absolutely! Aquatic therapy provides a low stress way for a child to gradually gain comfort in the water.
- **Better Focus and Optimized Learning.** The warm water in the pool tends to decrease a child's tactile defensiveness. This helps them to focus their attention on other things like vocal and verbal imitation and production. The environment is also very motivating and reinforcing for developing language and cognitive skills. As children are engaged and attending to tasks for longer periods of time, they get closer to reaching their optimal learning potential.
- **Oral-Motor Treatment.** Many children receiving oral-motor treatment tend to be defensive. Their uneasiness is understandable. The Speech-Language Pathologist must don gloves, and actively touch the child's tongue, cheeks and jaw areas to help them develop awareness, strength, and mobility of the oral muscles. However, in the water, a child's defensiveness to this treatment is significantly reduced. The warm water relaxes them, and the therapist does not have to wear gloves because the water is safely treated and sanitized.
- **Safety Awareness.** Regular water-based therapy provides ample opportunities for therapists to instruct on the many safety precautions we want our children to utilize around water.
- **Daily Life Skills.** Children working toward a functional goal of being able to dress themselves or assist with dressing themselves have many opportunities to work on these skills before and after their water-based therapy.