

# Underwater Treadmill for Dogs?

## What is an underwater treadmill?

The underwater treadmill is a form of hydrotherapy that involves a tank filled with water that has a treadmill in the bottom. The advantages of using an underwater treadmill versus a land treadmill is that it decreases pain and weight bearing stressors, offers generalized muscle relaxation in a warm water environment, challenges coordination and balance, and increases strength.

## How does the underwater treadmill make rehabilitation easier?

The water provides an upward thrust that reduces the weight of the dog's body. The amount of upward thrust depends on the volume of the water displaced. As the water depth increases, weight bearing decreases and allows decreased impact force from gravity as the legs are supported by water's buoyancy. Buoyancy also allows us to maximize passive and active range of motion.

## What are the indications for underwater treadmill hydrotherapy?

The underwater treadmill can be used for the recovery of most orthopedic and neurologic conditions, and is a useful addition to many postoperative therapy plans. It can also be used for conditions that do or do not require surgery. It can also be used in healthy animals to increase strength.

## How do dogs adapt to the underwater treadmill?

Usually the first two sessions require an assistant to be in the treadmill with the dog. The concept is foreign to our canine companions and what they see is a glass box that fills with water and then the floor moves! Most dogs will adapt after two sessions and be able to perform on their own.

## When and how often is hydrotherapy indicated?

Your dog's rehabilitation therapist will decide when and how often hydrotherapy is indicated. Usually dogs can be treated 2-3 times a week. The time spent on the treadmill usually starts slowly (5 minutes) and increases gradually to 20 minutes. The speed of the treadmill and the level of the water are determined by the therapist.

## What are the contraindications?

Cardiac disease, skin lesions or wounds, uncontrolled seizures, respiratory infection, fever, pregnancy, and hydrophobia are contraindications for hydrotherapy. Some canines do not like the environment, and if they are resistant to entering the treadmill or constantly trying to climb out of the treadmill, the treatment should be discontinued.

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