



## Kaiser Foundation Health Plan - Hawaii Aqua Therapy Guideline

Aqua therapy is the scientific practice of physical therapy in an aquatic environment. It uses the therapeutic properties of water and designed activity by qualified professional personnel. During aquatic therapy session, the buoyancy and resistance of the water helps individuals increase strength in joints and muscles, gain balance, and restore posture without putting undue stress on the body for a person with acute, transient or chronic disabilities, or diseases.

### Clinical Review

Aqua therapy may be considered medically necessary for conditions like:

- Severe osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid arthritis
- Recent amputation (surgical removal of a body part/limb)
- Paraparesis (weakness in both lower limbs) or hemiparesis (partial weakness on one side of the body)
- Paralytic condition (partial or complete loss of movement in the body/loss of muscle function in part of the body)
- Guillian-Barre syndrome (rare autoimmune disease that occurs when the body's immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system)
- Spinal cord and/or Brain injury that results in paresis or paralysis

Aqua therapy may be covered for the above conditions AND not able to tolerate land-based physical therapy due to having severe pain and restrictions in movement and strength. A physical therapy evaluation may be used as a data source for this determination.

**Covered** when not able to tolerate land-based physical therapy:

- Initial evaluation (1 visit) + Treatment (9 visits) for total of 10 visits.
- Ongoing treatment with documentation showing progression/medical necessity with authorization.

**Not Covered** when not medically necessary, such as when:

- Used for maintenance therapy with neither improvement nor decline.
- Used to treat a transient or easily reversible loss of function.
- Not prescribed by a healthcare professional as part of the treatment plan.

### Approval

### Dates

Chief Approval: Merle Miura-Akamine, MD  
Chief, Department of Physiatry

10/2022, 12/2023

### References

Medicare Noridian Healthcare Solutions Jurisdiction E – Medicare Part B, Outpatient Therapy and Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Publication 100-02, Chapter 15, Section 220 and 230 – Coverage for PT, OT, and SLP.