

POSITION STATEMENT: Hydrotherapy

Date:	June 2019	Date of Last Review:	January 2017
Policy			
<p>This position statement covers the use of hydrotherapy in place of land-based physiotherapy. It is the responsibility of the referring and treating physiotherapist to ensure compliance with this commissioning advice.</p> <p>The choice of land or water based NHS physiotherapy is at the discretion of the provider service. As outcomes for land and water based physiotherapy are equivalent, providers will deliver either service within the agreed standard land based physiotherapy first and follow up tariff prices.</p> <p>NB: Since hydrotherapy is not considered to be an essential service, this policy applies only where local provision is available. Where local provision is not available, patients should receive land-based physiotherapy.</p>			

Definition: Hydrotherapy is the use of a systematically applied exercise therapy in water. It may be active or passive and be applied individually or in groups.

Health benefits: Randomised controlled trials of hydrotherapy compared with land-based physiotherapy show no difference in effectiveness on outcomes of function and pain for patients with osteoarthritis¹⁻³, idiopathic arthritis⁴, rheumatoid arthritis⁵⁻⁷, asthma⁸, back pain^{9, 10}, fibromyalgia¹¹, haemophilia¹², parkinson's disease¹³, rehabilitation following stroke¹⁴. Very low quality evidence suggests that hydrotherapy may be better than conventional physiotherapy for rehabilitation in patients following hip or knee replacement^{15, 16}. For other indications, there are no RCTs of hydrotherapy versus land-based physiotherapy. NICE does not recommend the use of hydrotherapy over conventional physiotherapy for any indications.

GLOSSARY:

Hydrotherapy: Exercise therapy in warm water (33-36°C) used for the treatment of different conditions.

Physiotherapy: Rehabilitation through physical intervention to restore movement and function.

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