

Recovery exercises are also a controlled workout



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Fitness expert John Platero show us three movements to improve the integrity and health of the joints.

Any athlete will tell you: Rest and recovery are critical to any workout regimen.

John Platero, director of education for the National Council for Certified Personal Trainers, created this three-move pool circuit to provide a recovery workout that will get your heart pumping even as it helps care for hard-working joints.

"As we get older, we tend to move less and less," Platero says, and that's why "the pool is magic. It acts as a compression sleeve, protecting the joints." When you're doing these moves, Platero said, "don't think 'workout' ... think 'controlled movement' with the resistance coming from the water."

Ideally, this circuit — the scarecrow, the Michael Jackson and the bear hug — is done in water that's roughly chest-deep. Please keep safety in mind. You're likely to get winded, so you might want to stay near the edge of the pool, where you can rest and catch your breath.

What it does

Gives you a recovery workout on days when your body needs a break but you still want a calorie burn. If you wear a heart-rate monitor, you'll be surprised to see how this circuit sends your heart soaring with very little impact.

What to do

The scarecrow: Gently squat in the water until it's shoulder depth. Position your upper arms straight out at your side and your hands up, palms facing forward, like a scarecrow. Hold your core tight as you lower and raise your forearms, slicing through the water. Let your comfort level dictate your range of motion.

The Michael Jackson: This mimics a move you likely saw from the performer. Raise the knee to hip height, and then gently sway the foot and ankle side to side for an inner and outer leg workout. Alternate legs. You can bend the knee so your foot is reaching out behind you, or simply allow it to dangle as the foot and ankle sway.

The bear hug: Gently squat in the water until it's shoulder depth. Bring your arms forward and around like you're hugging a barrel. Then reverse the movement so you squeeze the shoulder blades and stretch the chest muscles. "The faster you go, the harder it will be. This is going to really help your posture," Platero said.

How much

Perform these three moves in a circuit, with 10 to 20 repetitions for each move. Repeat the circuit three to five times. Over time, add more repetitions.

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