

Burn Calories in the Pool (No Laps Required!)

The best exercises to blast fat and tone your whole body in water

Charlotte Hilton Andersen

Bicycle



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Great for your abs on dry land, doing the ab bicycle in the water adds extra work for your core, shoulders, and legs to keep you from floating away.

Tip: Rest your elbows on a pool noodle if you don't have a pool edge to use.

Double Leg Lift



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[ALL PHOTOS](#)

Leaning back on the pool edge, lower your legs straight down and then raise them up as high as you can, keeping legs perfectly straight and together. The water provides extra difficulty because you have to fight your body's natural buoyancy to maintain control.

Tip: If this is too difficult (yes, I know our girl is making this look easy, but it can be tough with the water pushing down on you), sit on the edge of the pool and perform the movement from there.

Half Suspended Jumping Jack



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Jumping jacks go to a whole new moon-walk level in the pool. Not only do you have to push through the water, but you also have to keep your balance as your natural buoyancy will lead you to tip forward or back. Jump your legs out as you normally would but don't let your feet touch the bottom when you bring them back to the center.

Tip: Try a full suspended jumping jack by doing the whole jack without touching the bottom!

Bicep Curl



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Using a weight, do a normal bicep curl. The resistance of the water will make you work harder in both directions, especially if you use a special pool weight like the Aqualogix bells. "The fins allow you to isolate different muscle groups by adjusting the water resistance," says Chris Kost, who has 20 years of aquatics experience working with pro athletes like baseballer Joe Mauer.

Tip: Be careful to keep the full range of motion under the water.

Flutter Kick



Holding on to the edge of the pool, a paddleboard, a noodle, or your dog (if he'll let you), kick your legs rapidly behind you.

Tip: While splashing is fun, you'll get a better workout if you keep your legs under the water and focus on moving them faster, not higher.

Frog Jump



Starting from a "plie position" (heels together, knees bent outward, and bottom tucked under), jump as high as you can out of the water, returning to the plie as you land. The deeper you go in the water, the harder your quads and butt will have to work to propel you out of it.

Tip: To really work those inner thighs, go as quickly as you can with no rest at the top or bottom of the move. Ribbits are optional but totally encouraged.

Cross Knees to Elbows



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From standing, bring one elbow down across your body to meet your opposite knee, holding your core tight and then switch sides. Yes, you'll look like you're folk dancing in the pool, but if anyone asks just shout "He's after me Lucky Charms!" and they'll leave you alone. Take full advantage of the pool and do this move by heading to the deep end and just bouncing lightly off your toe between each rep.

Tip: Isolating the move on one side will burn out your oblique muscles faster.

Knee Tuck



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While this is a powerful plyometric move for your legs on land, you add in some core work in the pool. The water will slow down your movement and force your abs to engage to help stabilize. Plus, the water takes out the high-impact nature of the jump for anyone with knee or foot injuries. From a standing position perform a tuck jump by bringing both knees up to your chest. Got that mastered? Try it while treading water.

Tip: Keep your chest up and shoulders back or you'll end up with a face full of water. Not that I'd personally know anything about that...

Noodle Bicycle



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Leave the row, row, rowing your boat to the preschoolers (although that's a great workout too) and ride your pool noodle like a bicycle by pedaling your legs to propel you forward across the pool. You'll feel the burn in your legs first but the cardio catches up with you quickly.

Tip: You'll feel silly, but if anyone laughs you can fill up your noodle with water and then blow into one end to hose them.

Lateral Raises



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While the Butterfly stroke is one of the ultimate shoulder exercises, not very many of us can do it. The next best way to get a good burn in your deltoids is to use pool weights, [kettlebells](#) (yep, they can go in the water—just don't drop them or you can crack the pool tiles), or even two pool noodles and raise and lower them straight out from your sides.

Tip: Keep the whole range of motion in the water to take full advantage of that extra resistance.

Cross Country Skiing



Jump your legs forward and back while moving your arms in opposition. The deeper you go in the water, the harder it will be.

Tip: It's just like using a Nordic Track but without the risk of both feet sliding forward, slamming you into the hip guard and knocking you off the side (not that that isn't fun).

Noodle Crunch



With a pool noodle under your shoulders, pull your abs in and perform a crunch. The 3-dimensional nature of the pool means that not only do you need to work your abs laterally but you also have to stabilize your body in the vertical and horizontal planes. Crunches to the power of 3!

Tip: If the noodle keeps flying away from you, you can always hold onto the edge of the pool.

Noodle Plank

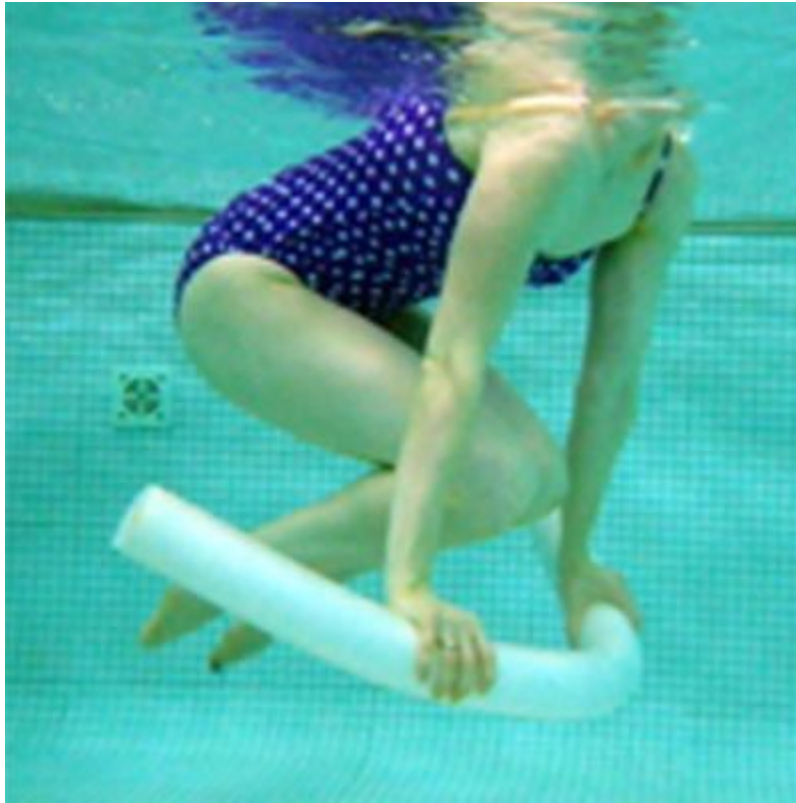


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Holding the noodle in front of you, push down until you are in a plank position with your body in a straight line and your toes on the bottom.

Tip: This move's a lot easier than the land version since the water is helping to support your weight, so that means you can hold it even longer!

Noodle Plank with Knee Tuck



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Noodle plank too easy for you? Try tucking your knees up to your chest and then shooting your legs out behind you back to plank position. The water will really push back against you so kick out hard or you'll just flip yourself over the front.

Tip: If you do flip yourself over the noodle just pretend you did it on purpose, like a seal at the zoo. Don't ask for fish though, you don't want to be greedy.

Noodle Press Down



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Holding the noodle in front of you, push it down until it touches your legs and then release it back up. If you need more resistance than the noodle offers, move up to a kettlebell or [Aqualogix bell](#) to really work those shoulders.

Tip: Imagine you're a old fashioned washer woman. Or that you're holding someone you hate under the water. You know, whatever you're feeling that day.

Noodle Flyback



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Mount your pool noodle like a bicycle, but this time use sweeping forward-and-back motions with your arms to move you backwards across the pool. You'll feel this one through your chest, shoulders, upper back, and even abs.

Tip: If it's too much for your arms, feel free to bicycle your legs as well. Just don't get your pants caught in the chain.

Otter Roll



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Holding a beach ball (or any ball that floats) to your chest, lay on top of it so you are facing the water. Then, throw your weight to one side, spinning around the ball until you return to the top. Don't forget to blow air out of your nose so you don't inhale it on the bottom.

Tip: Once you have the roll mastered one way, reverse directions for a whole new challenge.

Pendulum Swing



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Holding on to the edge of the pool, tick tock your legs side to side (one at a time) like a pendulum swinging. These leg lifts are much harder than the Jane Fonda variety, as you have to push against the water in both directions. If you need more of a challenge, try hooking a kettlebell around your foot.

Tip: Bring your leg up as high as you can to work that outer thigh.

Front Raises



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Similar to the noodle pressdown, this move uses pool weights or [kettlebells](#) to work your shoulders from a different angle. Holding your arms straight out in front of you at shoulder height, push the weights down to your legs and then raise them back to shoulder height.

Tip: Aim for one smooth motion with no rest at the top or the bottom, keeping the whole range of motion under the water.

Ladder Pull-Up

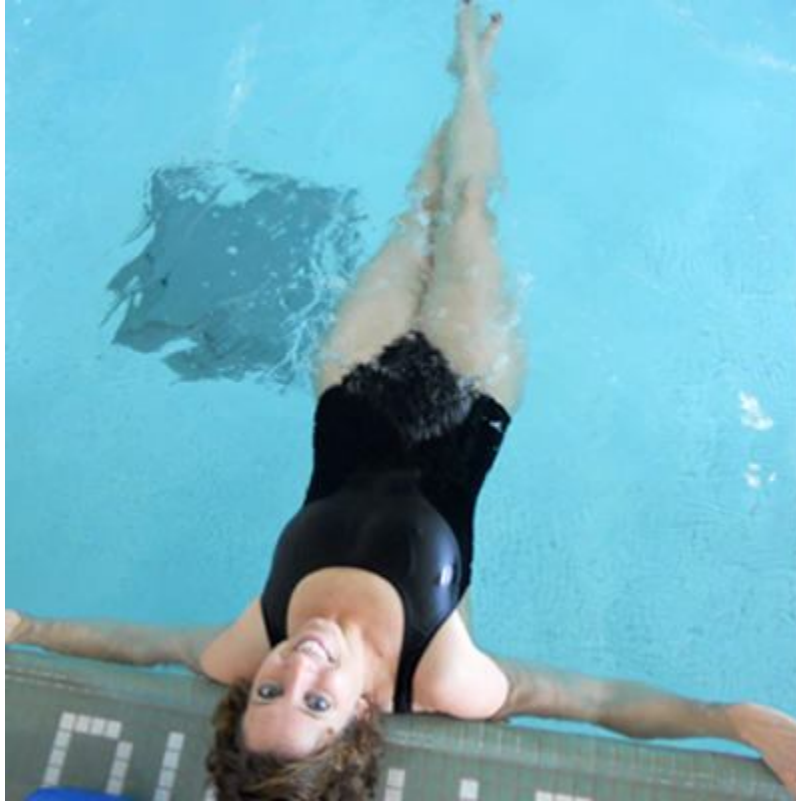


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Grasping the railing or ladder out of the pool, use just your arms to pull yourself up out of the water. Lower and repeat. This is a great move for people who may not be able to do a pull-up on land because the water helps to support your weight, allowing you to go through the full range of motion.

Tip: Change your grip to work different muscles. In a chin-up position (palms facing you), you'll work your biceps. In a pull-up position, you'll work your back, lats, and shoulders. A wider grip will use more back muscles and a closer grip will use more arm muscles.

Scissor Kicks



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Laying back on the edge of the pool, open your legs like a V and then bring them quickly together with one ankle on top of the other. Open legs again and bring them together with the other ankle on top. Do small fast movements to work your quads and inner thighs. In addition to the leg work, your core will need to be engaged to keep you from floating or sinking.

Tip: Pointing your toes will make you look like a synchronized swimmer but it will also help engage your butt and quads more.

Sculling



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This gym-class staple is good for more than just motoring around the pool like a turtle. In a crunched position, cup your hands and move them quickly back and forth in a figure-8 motion to keep your head above the water. Aim for a full minute and move up from there. This is a great cardio move, but you'll soon start to feel your biceps, shoulders, and upper back burn.

Tip: As much as you will want to, don't use your legs.

Toes-Up Sculling



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To take your sculling to the next level, extend your legs to add extra resistance, making sure to keep your toes above the water at all times.

Tip: Get a pedicure. If you are going to be staring at your toes for that long, they might as well be a color that amuses you! Mine are cobalt blue.

Underwater Sit-Up



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Hooking your knees over the edge of the pool, lower yourself backwards as low as is comfortable and then pull your abs in tight to return to an upright position. Cross your arms over your chest to make it easier (or to hold your nose), or hold your hands behind your head to create more drag through the water and work those abs even more.

Tip: Breathe at the top—you don't have to do the whole set underwater unless you want to. Krista here can hold her breath for 2 minutes!

Skaters



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Starting from a wide stance, leap side to side, touching your toe to the ground behind your leg on each side. On land this cardio move works your legs on the jump and the landing, but in the water it's one continuous pull from side to side.

Tip: Picture Apollo Ohno. Sure, he probably doesn't do these in the water, but does it ever hurt to picture him? I thought not.

Speed Bag



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Tread water with your legs while doing a boxer speed bag (or the "wheels on the bus" if you're more familiar with nursery rhymes than Mohammed Ali) with your arms under water. It's a race to see whether your arms or legs will burn out first! If this is too tough, start out with just treading water for 1 minute and then doing the speed bag for 1 minute.

Tip: This is the water version of patting your head and rubbing your stomach—it just takes practice—but once you get it, you'll feel amazing. (Although you'll look "like a hyperactive 5-year-old" as my photographer pointed out.)

Ski Jumps



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Standing with both feet together, hop side to side as if you are skiing moguls. (The melty kind of moguls they have in the Carribean.) The water provides extra resistance but also protects fragile joints from the impact.

Tip: Work your arms too by swinging them close to your sides as you jump.

Squat Jumps



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Starting with feet wider than hip width, squat down and then explosively jump out of the water. The deeper you start, the harder you'll have to work to jump out.

Tip: This move doesn't work well with swim dresses or skirted bikinis as they catch the water and want to go south. As we found out the hard way.

Spiderman



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Just like Spiderman, you too can run up walls! Facing the pool wall, use your arms to keep your head above water while you run your feet up and down. The challenge in this move lies in using your arms to keep you from floating away from the wall. It's a cardio move but it's also a sneaky arm move—that Spiderman, he's all about deception.

Tip: If your spidey sense starts tingling, look for sharks.

Triceps Dips



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With your back to the edge, hold onto to the pool edge with both hands. Lift your body out of the water and then lower it. The water will help support your bodyweight so you can do lots of these!

Tip: Keep those elbows in tight to isolate the triceps.

Tire Runs



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Running with high knees and a wide stance, pretend you are stepping in tires. Fighting against the water, run forward across the short length of the pool and then backward. Speed is key!

Tip: You don't have to bring tires into the pool, but it would be way more awesome if you did.

Water Jogging



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Not just for old ladies or people rehabbing sports injuries, running through deep water is seriously challenging. If you haven't tried it recently, start with just a few lengths of the pool. The deeper the water, the harder the run. You can even wear a deep-water flotation belt to run without touching the bottom!

Tip: Kost says there are 3 positions you can do this (and any of the plyometric moves listed here) in: neutral (both feet on the bottom), suspended (no feet touching), and rebounding (bouncing lightly off the bottom)—each offers its own unique challenges so try them all!

Pushups



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Facing the edge of the pool, push your body up out of the water until your arms are fully extended.

Tip: Keep your elbows close to your sides to work those triceps! Also, no jumping—that's che