Water and Its Benefits for the Body and Mind



> Water is matter and matrix, mother and natural environment of life. Without water, there is no life. – Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, discoverer of vitamin C

For years, the motto that accompanies our maternity project has been: water is life, and life is within you. We are deeply convinced that this element has something magical and unparalleled.

Discussing the benefits of this element at a time when water is denied to the majority of people, especially those who would gain incredible advantages from it, is indeed a challenge. However, we enjoy challenges and understand that raising awareness of the importance of being immersed in water can help people overcome the current skepticism and, once possible, return to appreciating its advantages.

The ancient Greeks, already aware of the characteristics of activity in water, wrote:

> The ignorant one neither knows how to read nor how to swim.
> Plato, Laws 689

The Romans were also aware of the beneficial effects of water, as evidenced by the phrase “Salus per Aquam”, later translated in the English-speaking world as SPA, which in Latin means health through water.

Water is an element with a density approximately 800 times greater than that of air, and this characteristic is significant for two reasons. On one hand, it envelops the submerged part of the body, offering uniformly distributed resistance to movements, which requires more energy to perform. On the other hand, this resistance allows for better control and range of motion.

The density of water exerts pressure, even at the surface level, on all submerged areas, improving blood circulation and influencing heart rate. This enables demanding physical activity with high caloric consumption, but with a lower heart rate compared to land-based activities.

In terms of respiratory efficiency, the pressure exerted on the outside of the rib cage increases the effort of the inspiratory muscles, which are less engaged on land, while forced exhalation during head immersion trains the tone of the expiratory muscles. This results in improved respiratory efficiency.

In water, we can replicate many terrestrial movements both vertically and horizontally. The wonderful characteristic of weightlessness allows these movements to be performed in an open kinetic chain, without support, offering the advantage of avoiding stress on the joints. Movement control and the absence of gravity also enable a greater ROM (Range Of Motion) compared to dry land, resulting in a movement amplitude that is especially beneficial for the elderly and pregnant women, as it is not achievable in land-based activities. These incredible benefits make it possible for many groups of people, including those with mobility difficulties or overweight issues, to safely engage in physical activity.

A fascinating aspect of water lies in its ability to provide mental calm, tranquility, and the freedom of flowing thoughts. Listening to the sound of ocean waves, the rushing of a mountain stream, or the movement of water as we swim are all experiences that have beneficial effects on our bodies and reduce cortisol and adrenaline levels, the hormones associated with stress, promoting better mental and physical balance.

Ultimately, the water element enhances the benefits of the same physical activity performed on land and has a profound relaxing effect on both body and mind. A valuable aid against the stress we accumulate every day, which is why all of us hope to immerse ourselves in its flow again as soon as possible.

Giancarlo De Leo