

Script – Broadcast – Dive In: The health benefits of swimming for older adults

INTRO

Bob “Spider” Purcell admits he doesn’t move as fast as he used to. But he’s OK with that. At 96, Purcell is more than content getting in his exercise by swimming laps nearly every morning at the YMCA in Ottawa, Illinois.

((SOT))

Bob Purcell, swimmer, retired teacher

“I’m a slow swimmer. I just freestyle for half an hour, and that’s it. It keeps me going in the morning, really. I can feel down or not ready to do anything, but I get in that water, and it just peps me up.” (:13)

VO

Purcell is not the only senior who gets his exercise in the pool. Experts agree that water exercise is the ideal choice for several reasons. Travis Swink, DO, family practice physician at OSF HealthCare, says there are many reasons to swim. The support from the water can help people overcome painful movement caused by arthritis and other health issues. It can help with weight loss, reduce the risk of heart disease and improve overall endurance. It impacts all major muscle groups – especially the upper body, core and legs.

There’s more. Dr. Swink says it can help with circulation, reduce the impact on the spine, improve balance and reduce falls. It can even help with menopause. And if you don’t have access to a pool, no worries. Dr. Swink suggests using band therapy or a rowing machine that will offer the same type of workout.

((SOS))

Dr. Travis Swink, primary care provider, OSF HealthCare

“It increases strength and it increases mobility. When you have more agility, you have a lot better balance. So yes, people that are recovering, and you’ll see it with pro athletes when they have ankle injuries, they’re in a pool walking. It’s to increase that flexibility and mobility.” (:16)

TAG

Purcell, who was tagged “Spider” in high school when a classmate remarked how skinny he was, learned to swim in grade school. But he really dipped his toes in the water when he retired from teaching 40 years ago. Purcell used to walk and kayak but has found doing laps more to his liking.

He says swimming has helped him with overall endurance. Every morning, he drinks a healthy shake before heading off to swim. One day a week, he and his wife, Kathy, volunteer at OSF HealthCare Saint Elizabeth Medical Center.

Purcell’s advice to other seniors is simply to get moving. No matter what you do. He adds start by walking and work your way up to two miles a day. And if you can swim, it’s even better. That’s just the icing on the cake.