

Arthritis & Exercise: The Next Level

Where is the AEA Arthritis Program Headed?

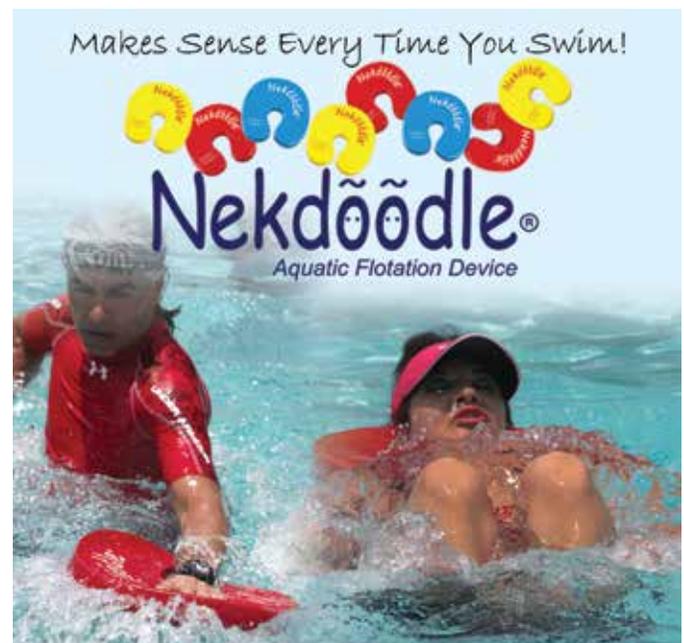
By AEA

AEA took over management of the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program (AFAP) and Exercise Program (AFEP) in 2015 with the release of the updated manual, development of the online training course and examination, and revised continuing education and renewal requirements. Developed specifically for those living with arthritis and related musculoskeletal conditions, the AFAP and AFEP have always been much needed options. AEA's goal was to maintain the integrity of the programs, following the evidence-based materials previously developed by the Arthritis Foundation, while moving them forward with minor enhancements.

The two separate manuals (AFAP and AFEP) were combined into a single all-inclusive resource, the first edition of the *AEA AF Program Leader Manual: A Training Guide for Exercise and Aquatic Programming* for ease of study, exam preparation, lesson planning and program leadership. This also assists those who are teaching both formats to have all the materials in one area and encourages others to consider expanding their training and class programming to encompass both modalities. Exercises that were incorporated into both programs were adjusted to reflect the same name and general descriptions, variations and precautions/cautions. Terminology was also adjusted for consistency between programs. Each chapter of the manual begins with Key Concepts and concludes with a Summary, Review Questions & Answers, and References & Resources. This format assists with self-testing for understanding and application as well as examination preparation.

So that the program could be more easily accessible to fitness professionals around the world, the training course and examination were transitioned into an online version. AEA International Training Specialists are beginning to introduce and implement the programs in their respective countries. Mee-Hee Park has translated the manual into Korean, Katrien Lemahieu (the Netherlands) is a frequent contributor to the Leader Tools resource with highlights of the programming she is offering, and Tinoca Senra (Portugal) offered the day-long Program Leader Development workshop at the 2019 Mundo Hidro convention.

All of these changes have been well-received, and the updates have encouraged many fitness professionals to either begin, or renew, their involvement with the programs. If you are not currently active with this branch of AEA training and programming, we encourage you to explore your options to better serve individuals living with arthritis, a disease that affects over 50 million Americans, which translates to 1 in every 5 adults, 300,000 children and countless families (Arthritis Foundation, arthritis.org).



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AEA, an educational organization, requires that fitness professionals maintain training/certification through continuing education. Additionally, AEA recognizes that our industry is constantly progressing, which mandates the need for us to keep our materials updated. So, in 2020, we will be updating the existing AFAP/AFEP resources to include new industry research and the programming applicable to the interests and goals of the growing population of exercise participants.

Some people with arthritis are able to tolerate a higher intensity workout and the benefits may be greater than that of a moderate or lower intensity workout.

One of the most exciting changes you will be seeing is the addition of a new educational program, Arthritis & Exercise: The Next Level, an advanced training certificate program. A two-part training, this will include an in-person workshop on aquatic training principles plus an online course on land-based training principles. This course will guide fitness professionals in applying their knowledge base to develop programs appropriate for individuals living with arthritis able to tolerate a more advanced workout. With a focus on designing safe and effective programming, the goal of the course is to help fitness professionals recognize when it is prudent and how to safely progress the designated exercises, equipment recommendations, and protocols. Because this course will be based upon existing fitness protocols and an understanding of human anatomy, physiology and kinesiology, there will be pre-requisites for registration. Since each part of the course can be completed independently, the pre-requisites are as follows:

- Part I: Aquatic Training Principles - AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification PLUS successful completion of the AFAP* Online Training & Exam.
- Part II: Land-based Training Principles - AEA Aquatic Fitness Professional Certification OR Nationally Recognized Land-based Fitness Certification PLUS successful completion of the AFEP* Online Training & Exam.

*Anyone who completes the AFAP Online Training & Exam is also recognized as an AFEP Program Leader.

The Arthritis & Exercise: The Next Level course includes specific learning objectives and, upon completion of both parts of the course, the fitness professional should be able to:

- Describe the overall healthy impact of the most common types of arthritis and how it relates to overall health and function.
- Define and understand the purpose for exercise progression and regression.
- Recognize key aquatic concepts for altering exercise intensity and how these concepts can be applied to various types of arthritis programming.
- Recognize key land-based concepts for altering exercise intensity and how these concepts can be applied to various types of arthritis programming.

- Identify appropriate exercise progression strategies.
- Learn how to analyze exercises (outside of the recommended AFAP/AFEP exercises) as appropriate options for individuals with arthritis.
- Understand the importance of exercise intensity in achieving desired results and techniques for appropriately monitoring exercise intensity.
- Create AFAP/AFEP lesson plans (daily as well as 6- to 8-week sessions) to safely progress the program and recognize the importance of a health education component.

As with the updates AEA made to the original AFAP/AFEP resources, this project will include input from multiple experts in the field and developed under the guidance of Kimberly Huff, MS, and Lori Sherlock, EdD. This strong collaboration will ensure that fitness professionals are offered a safe and effective evidence-based program with a focus on the practical component, allowing the information to transfer directly into exercise programming.

Kimberly Huff, also an AEA Training Specialist, shares the following, *“I became certified to lead the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program in the early 80’s. I have had the opportunity to witness class participants experiencing the physical, emotional and social benefits of the program. The current program is great. It satisfies the goal of providing gentle exercises to improve mobility and reduce pain for people with arthritis.”*

“Over the last 40 years, the Arthritis Foundation programs have been updated, but the focus remains on providing a safe exercise program for people with limited mobility due to arthritis. Current trends and research have suggested that there are more people with arthritis, that people with arthritis are more active, and people who are more active are interested in a higher intensity workout.”

“Every time I teach the AEA Arthritis Foundation Program Leader Development course, someone inquires, ‘What do you recommend for people with arthritis that are able to tolerate a higher intensity exercise program?’ Our answer until now, has been to refer them to other exercise classes with the understanding that they may need to modify some of the exercises. AEA has heard this and answered the call.”

“Thanks to recent research we have learned that some people with arthritis are able to tolerate a higher intensity workout and that the benefits may be greater than that of a moderate or lower intensity workout. The course, Arthritis & Exercise: The Next Level, is being developed based on current research and trends in exercise to provide a higher intensity exercise program that is safe and effective for people with arthritis. So, we will no longer need to refer people with arthritis to other classes hoping they will know how to modify the exercises, this will be a class created specifically for them!”

We hope that you will be onboard with AEA as we continue to provide the most effective exercise programming for individuals living with arthritis! ■