

Swimming

Breaking up the monotony of training or hitting the pool for a zero impact activity makes swimming an important cross training method. While swimming relies primarily on the upper body for power, it efficiently challenges both aerobic endurance and VO2max, making it a very hard workout. Moreover, it challenges different systems, which can be a great change of pace for runners looking to become better all-around athletes. For injured runners, it may be their only cross training choice because they require zero impact and lack the deep water necessary for aqua jogging.

Studies have shown that swimming elicits significant increases in VO2max and aerobic endurance ([Study 1](#) – [Study 2](#)). Unfortunately, that fitness does not translate directly to improved running performance. Because specificity and neurological/skeletal training are important factors in running fitness, [studies find](#) that no changes to specific running fitness were found after 10 weeks of swimming, despite other positive physiological adaptations. This doesn't mean swimming is a bad cross training choice for runners. Instead, I suggest that swimming be used as a supplemental cross training activity, combined with other methods, to be most effective.

Sample workouts

Easy - Easy swimming sessions should be used as recovery between hard workouts or general maintenance. In general, swimming for 20-40 minutes is considered a good workout, unless you are an experienced or advanced swimmer. Heart rates during swimming are difficult to monitor because breathing patterns are altered and the being in the water decreased heart rate naturally. However, during easy swims, you should concentrate on an effort level that is equivalent to your typical easy runs.

Medium – Adding workouts to your swims can help break up the monotony and add in a level of VO2 max training. Some examples are:

1. 5 min easy w/u, 200m, 1min rest, 4 x (4 x 50 w/20 sec rest and 45sec between sets), 200m, 5 min easy c/d
2. 5 min easy w/u, 400m, 1 min rest, 2 x 200m w/20 sec rest, 4 x 100m w/15sec rest, 8 x 50m w/10 sec rest, 12 x 25m w/5sec rest, 5 min easy c/d
3. 5 min easy w/u, 800m, 1min rest, 8x100m w/20sec rest, 400m, 30sec rest, 8x50m w/10sec rest, 200m, 5 min easy c/d

4. 5 min easy w/u, 2 x 250m w/2min rest, 150m, 30sec rest, 200m, 30 sec rest, 8 x 25m w/10 sec rest, 300m, 5min easy c/d

Cross training can be tough, especially when you're injured or want to be increasing your volume faster. By providing a variety of workouts and implementing some swimming workouts, you'll emerge from your injury with minimal fitness loss and challenge your aerobic system without the pounding associated with running.

"The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses - behind the lines, in the gym and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights."

-Muhammad Ali