Ask any swimmer, and they’ll tell you, that swimming performance is impacted after being out of the water just a few weeks. During this universal closure of pools due to Covid-19, many swimmers may find themselves out of the water for several months with many aquatic centers hesitant to open. It can’t be stressed enough for the importance of staying active and performing high intensity dry land exercises to minimize the loss of conditioning.

Extended breaks impact the body in numerous ways

* Reduction of stroke rate
* Increase in blood lactate concentrations
* Stability within joints compromised
* Flexibility lost

Skeletal Muscles

* Oxidative capacity is decreased
* Muscle glycogen is reduced
* Decline in muscle respiratory capacity
* Diminished oxygen transport system

Body composition changes

* Weight gain
* Muscle loss

Swimmers returning to the water should consider many factors to have a successful and productive recovery back to previous levels of fitness.

Mental Fitness

* Go slow and listen to your body
* Reward yourself for little technique improvements (ie. four dolphin kicks off the wall)
* Be patient
* Do not feel that you need to make up for lost training
* Challenging the body too quickly leads to injury and will set you further back in recovering
* Write your workouts down each day to note your progress
* Make a long-term goal; it will give purpose to the training

Considerations of initial recovery workouts

* Current fitness level
* Training history
* Age and genetics

Workout Design

* Start with 2-3 workouts in a week, then as your body adjusts to the workload, add one more
* Slowly add in yardage, adding in 10% more every few practices
* Warm-up for a longer period of time and conduct it at an easy pace
* Focus on technique, not effort. Use this time to rebuild your strokes
* Use moments for rest (:20) vs. holding yourself to an interval
* Use fins to ease the effort being applied by the shoulders and arms
* Add in sculling to assist the hands to gain the feel of the water

Protect your shoulders

* Even if you have been lifting or doing stretch cord strengthening, it is not the same as swimming
* The muscles that support and surround the joint are not as strong
* Stability has been compromised
* Flexibility may have been lost

Stay active now. Don’t just stand around waiting for pools to open. Strength and mobility exercises will assist in shortening your recovery period. Be creative and consider how new exercise routines relate to swimming stroke movements. You may just find a new cross training routine to incorporate into your weekly training plan even after returning to the water.