SWIM. BIKE. RUN.

STUCK INDOORS? HERE'S A KILLER SWIM WORKOUT THAT YOU CAN DO WITHOUT A POOL OR THE OCEAN

By Fraser Rubens

If you don't have access to a pool during this period of self-isolation, it's reasonable to assume that your swim fitness will take a hit; unfortunately, swimming isn't exactly an accessible exercise if you can't go down to the beach or your local public pool to get in a good swim set . However, we here at Triathlon Queensland believe that going for a swim is more of a state of mind rather than a water-dependant workout, and therefore, nothing should stand between you and your desire to smash out a solid swimming training session.

The three main muscle groups that you target during a swim set (abs, shoulders, legs), can all be easily trained with body weight exercises while you're in the comfort of your own home. A balanced workout is an important factor for any multisport athlete, so while the run and cycle aspect of the sport can be easily trained in isolation (for now), you don't have to let your swim fitness slip just because you don't have access to a pool. By following these exercises, you'll see massive improvements when you dive back into the water; you'll be able to avoid off-season injury, reduced lung capacity, and as we're going into winter, you won't even have to deal with the soul-crushing, mind-numbing icy water you experience during a 5am winter swim set!

Abs

Most of the power that propels you through the water while swimming is generated by your trunk muscles. When you kick, you engage your glutes and hip flexors, and your stroke engages most muscles across your upper back and chest. At the centre of all of this is your abs and oblique muscles, which are the key to sturdy hips, a stable body position, and strong body rotation in the water. Try these exercises to develop strong, swimming-ready abs and core muscles:

- **Jackknife sit-ups**: Lying face-up on the ground with your arms above your head, pull your legs and your arms up off the ground so they meet above you. Touch your toes, so your body makes a U-shape, with only your bum and lower back touching the ground. Extend back down so you return to the starting position, and repeat.
- **Planks:** Lying face-down on the ground, raise your body so that only your forearms and toes are on the ground. Engage your core and hold your body tight for as long as you can.
- **Supermans:** Lying face-down on the ground with your arms out in front of you, raise your arms and legs so only your hips and lower abs are resting on the ground. Hold your arms and legs off the ground for five seconds, then relax and repeat.
- **Flutter kicks:** Lying face-up on the ground, raise your neck and shoulders so they are hovering just above the ground, and kick your legs very gently as if you are kicking freestyle in the pool. For extra stability, put your hands under your bum or splayed out by your side.

Shoulders

If your abs are the MVP muscle group when you swim, then your shoulder muscles are the player with the most assists. Your shoulders consist of multiple small muscles, ligaments, and tendons which are incredibly important but also quite delicate. If you don't strengthen your shoulders with cross-training, you leave yourself exposed to dislocation, microtears, and other issues that can stop you from a great faux swim workout. These exercises will help you increase your shoulder strength, help pull you through the water, and improve stability and support to avoid injury, so you can dive back in the pool fitter and stronger than ever.

- **Incline pushups:** Find a shallow incline that is unlikely to move under you (i.e. a staircase, a sturdy table or couch, a milk crate against a wall). Move your feet out behind you so your body is at a 45° angle. Do a push up, bringing your chest to the surface of whatever your hands are resting on.
- **Pike pushups:** Starting off in a traditional push-up position, raise your bum in the air so your body makes an upside down V-shape. Push your upper body up and down so your head is raising and lowering to the floor. Make sure to look at your legs, not your arms, to ensure your neck is at rest.
- **Inch worm walkout:** Start standing with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend down, and keeping your feet planted, place your hands in front of you, and begin to 'walk' them out, keeping your legs straight, until your hands are out as far as they can go. Return to the starting position.
- **Shoulder taps:** Starting in a traditional push-up position with your arms locked, reach up with one arm and tap your opposite shoulder. Place this hand back down, and repeat with the opposite arm to the opposite shoulder.

Legs

Even though a lot of the energy you expend when kicking in the pool is generated by your abdominal and trunk muscles, strong legs and glutes are invaluable when it comes to swim training. A strong kick is what can set you apart from your competitors during a race, using that extra energy you've built up to pull away and come out of the water first, setting yourself up for a great bike leg. These exercises will help you build your strength in all of your leg muscles, and as an added bonus, this strength cross-training will also help you with your cycle and run legs when you get back into racing as well.

- **Jump squat:** Starting with your legs slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, ease into a deep squat, then explode into a jump, straightening your legs at the peak of the jump. Land directly back into the deep squat, and repeat.
- **Glute bridges (single leg and double leg):** Lying down face-up with your heels planted under your bum, raise your hips until your body is at a 45° angle. Continue to raise and lower your hips. For a harder workout, straighten one leg out in front of you, and raise and lower your hips with only one leg planted on the ground, then swap to the other leg.

- **Split lunges:** With your hands on your hips for stability, stretch one leg out in front of you at a 90° angle, and put the other behind you with your knee close to the ground. Move your back knee down so it touches the ground, then explode up into a jump, swapping your legs so your front one is now behind you, and your back one is now in front of you. Repeat.
- **Wall sits:** Find a sturdy wall, and with your back against it, move your legs out so they are at a 90° angle to the wall (as if you are siting in a chair). Hold for as long as you can.

Combination exercises

While working out each individual muscle group is great, exercises that engage all three muscle groups are best for indoor swim training. These below exercises will work out your shoulders, abs, and legs, as well as other muscle groups, all at once.

- **Wall balls:** The beauty of a wall ball is that you don't need a wall nor a ball to complete them (though it is best if you do this in a wide open space when you can't injure yourself or others). Find something heavy and malleable (ideally a medicine ball, but you could also use an old backpack filled with sand or containers of water). Pick up the ball/bag, squat down deep, and then explode up into a jump while pushing the object as far away from your chest as possible.
- **Burpees:** The king of bodyweight exercises that targets all important areas. Start off standing with your feet shoulder-width apart; drop to the ground, do a push-up. bringing your chest to the ground, then jump your feet back up so they land outside your hands. Reach your arms up and explode up into the air for a jump. Repeat.
- **Bear crawls:** A mobility exercise that targets all three key swimming areas. Start on all fours, keeping your back flat and your legs and arms shoulder-width apart. Crawl forward while keeping your back flat and your knees off the ground, like you're imitating a bear's movement.

Any combination of these four groups of exercises would make a great pool-less swim workout. Try starting with two from each group, then slowly increase until you can do all 15 in one go. Have you got a great workout that helps with your swimming that's not listed above? Let us know! Head to our Instagram and Facebook (@triathlonqueensland) and give us a shout!