

## Swimming Pool Lifts for Physical Therapy Programs

One of the potential challenges faced by aquatic therapy providers is how to get the patient into the pool. A patient with compromised mobility may have difficulty negotiating traditional methods of pool access, such as ladders or stairs.

One possible way to facilitate pool entry is via a sloped entry or ramp. Although this works well for ambulatory patients, it is a challenge for the non-ambulatory. Additionally, sloped entries can be very expensive to install. A legal ramp must provide a 1:12 slope ratio; for every 1 foot of depth, there needs to be 12 feet of ramp. A ramp extending into a pool with a depth of 4 feet will need to be 48 feet long – not a realistic option for most therapy environments. Additionally, since the overall length of the ramp is in excess of 30 feet, the ramp must provide a landing that is a minimum of 5 feet in length. Depending on the type of sloped entry installation required, costs can range anywhere from \$25,000 to \$40,000.

A simpler and more economical solution is to install a swimming pool lift. Pool lifts work on virtually any type of pool and can be used by almost anyone to gain access to the pool.

### Pool Lift Options

There are several different kinds of swimming pool lifts available, providing facilities with options that fit a variety of programs and budget.

### Electronic Lifts

Battery powered swimming pool lifts operate very much like hospital patient lifts. They use a 24 volt rechargeable battery to power an electronic actuator, which performs the lifting operation. Battery powered lifts can be completely portable, removable, or permanently installed. Removable lifts are mounted into a permanent deck anchor, but can be removed when not in use. Battery powered lifts feature rigid seats, can be independently operated, and meet all ADA guidelines for pool lifts.

### Water Powered Lifts

Water powered lifts use the local water supply to perform the lifting operation. These lifts are connected to the water source by either a water

hose or a supply pipe. They feature a rigid seat, which facilitates transfers, and can be operated independently by the user. Water powered lifts are permanently mounted to the pool deck and generally meet ADA accessibility guidelines for swimming pool lifts.

### Manual Lifts

Manually operated pool lifts are the least expensive. The lifting mechanism on this type of lift is a hydraulic cylinder. This type of lift requires operator assistance, which prohibits its use in public facilities that are subject to ADA. These lifts typically include a sling for the seat and are mounted into the pool deck.

### Lift Considerations

There are many factors to consider when selecting a pool lift. The most obvious is the location of your program.

In hospitals and private clinics, space is often the most important consideration. Be sure that the area where the lift is installed has ample room for both transfers and wheelchair storage.

Depending on the profile of your patients, weight capacity of the lift could be important. ADA guidelines mandate a 300 lb. lifting capacity. However, there are heavy duty lifts on the market that provide more lifting capacity if needed.

Seating systems vary. Be sure that the seating system on the lift you select can accommodate the bulk of your patient population and can be adapted for patients who require special considerations.

Pool lifts are available from a variety of distribution channels. Most Durable Medical Equipment (DME) dealers market these products in the health care space, while swimming pool equipment companies sell into the aquatic sector. Additionally, when purchasing a lift, find out about installation assistance (if required) and follow up service.

For more information about pool lifts and ADA guidelines, visit [www.poollifts.com](http://www.poollifts.com), contact the US Access Board, or visit their website: [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov).