



Atlanta Underwater Explorers

AUE Bubbles

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3 Health Tips for Aging Divers

By Selene Yeager

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"Bumper-sticker wisdom tells us that 'no one gets out of this life alive!'"

Look around dive boats these days and you'll see more than a touch of gray against that vast sea of blue. The generation that popularized our sport in the sixties and seventies is now a few decades older and still going strong, as evidenced by the fact that the average of DAN members is now 45, the highest it's ever been. That's good news for today's older adults who would rather celebrate their newfound seniority on a shipwreck at 100 feet than on a cruise ship playing shuffleboard.

What's less good news is half of all dive fatalities are in the 40 to 59 age group. Advancing years bring a natural physical decline, as well as a slew of age-related health issues such as hardening of the arteries and pulmonary disease that can spell high risk for divers. Generally speaking, however, experts agree that healthy divers of any age can enjoy the sport safely. They just have to be smart about their potential limitations. Here's what you need to know.

1. No need to get bent about getting bent: The biggest worry many older divers have should actually be their smallest--namely, getting bent. Though Doppler studies have found that older divers have more venous gas emboli ("bubbles") over their hearts than younger divers, they haven't found a connection between age and decompression illness. Likewise, advancing age doesn't increase your risk of carbon dioxide retention--a condition that can cause confusion and seizures, according to a Duke University study.

2. Pay attention to age-related ills: Bumper-sticker wisdom tells us that "no one gets out of this life alive!" Well, darn few get out without a few nagging health conditions along the way, either. Heart disease is the biggie. High cholesterol. Hypertension. Hardening of the arteries. All can increase your risk for heart attack down below. Get your doc's OK if you haven't been diving or are at high risk. If you take blood-pressure medications, tell your doctor you're a diver, so you get a prescription that fits your active lifestyle. If you were or are a smoker, get a pulmonary test.

3. Keep on moving! Regular exercise slows age-related declines in physical ability and helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity and more. Ideally, your routine should include 30 to 45 minutes of cardio like walking or swimming most days a week; weight training twice a week to maintain your muscle and strength, and some yoga or stretching to retain and restore flexibility.

For more info, access the web link below.

<http://www.sportdiver.com/keywords/health-and-fitness/health-tip-aging-and-diving>

How to Improve Your Buoyancy

By Thomas Gronfeldt

Practicing your buoyancy is key to developing good dive skills: this collection of exercises will help you improve.

The best way to improve your buoyancy is doubtlessly to dive more. But sometimes during dives we further emphasize poor habits, such as using propulsion for buoyancy and inflating the BCD more than necessary to compensate for too much weight, which keeps us from developing top-level buoyancy skills. If you want to top-tune your buoyancy, the following exercises can be good supplements to your day-to-day diving activities, and can be used by instructors conducting buoyancy-course dives. Adding a bit of fun and games can be very motivational for divers practicing buoyancy.

The Buoyancy Check

First and foremost, the classic buoyancy check should be the first step in optimizing your buoyancy. In water deep enough for you to hover upright, with a few feet below your fins, first remove all weight from your BCD or weight belt. Then deflate your BCD completely and add weight until you are able to float at the surface with the water at eye level, still with your BCD deflated and breathing normally through your regulator. When you exhale, you should be able to start your descent. With this amount of weight, you'll be very close to an optimal starting point for perfecting your buoyancy, and for the other exercises on this list as well.

Pass the Block

One drill I often utilize when I work on buoyancy with divers is one I call "Pass the Block." I bring a small 2- or 4-pound weight block (the type you put on a weight belt), and, with all divers hovering a few feet off the bottom, we pass the block from diver to diver. This sudden shift in weight trains divers to maintain their position by using their breath to increase and decrease their buoyancy, as well as to maintain their balance and trim. For more advanced variations you can use two blocks, one 2-pound and one 4-pound, or you can do a little sleight-of-hand and switch a 2-pound block for a 4-pound block (or vice versa) without anyone noticing. You can also do a little feign, and hand the block towards the next diver in line, only to pull it back just before he or she takes it. At this point, they've already started making the adjustment for the added weight of the block, and will need to adjust back quickly.

Descent Games

On descents, I often challenge my dive course trainees to do a smooth descent and come as close to the bottom as possible, in horizontal trim, without touching the bottom. The person who comes closest without hitting the bottom wins a symbolic prize, or simply the praise of the group.

Mission Impossible

A variation of the exercise above is to challenge divers to come extremely close to the bottom, spread-eagle, like Tom Cruise hovering over the floor in Langley in the first *Mission Impossible* film, but again without touching the bottom. The diver who manages to hover in this awkward position the longest wins.



"The best way to improve your buoyancy is doubtlessly to dive more. But sometimes during dives we further emphasize poor habits, such as using propulsion for buoyancy and inflating the BCD more than necessary to compensate for too much weight"

How to Improve Your Buoyancy – Cont.

Jumping Through Hoops

Tying an old-fashioned hula-hoop to a 2-pound weight gives you a great tool for practicing swimming in control. The challenge is to swim through these without touching them with hands, fins, tank, or any other part of your body or gear.

Blind Eye

A great, and very simple, exercise is to ask a diver to hover close to the bottom. Then, once they have control of the hover, ask them to close their eyes. Loss of visual cues makes balancing much harder (try standing on one leg with your eyes closed and you'll know what I mean), and trains us to use our own body sensations as cues instead.

Safety Stop Hover

The final exercise, or check, is to remind divers that they should be able to complete the safety stop at 15 feet with 50 bars (or 800 psi) of pressure in their tank, without any air in their BCD, maintaining their position in the water simply by using their breath. This can act as an extra check in addition to the initial buoyancy check.

For more info, access the web link below.

<http://scubadiverlife.com/2014/11/11/improve-buoyancy/>

Guidelines for Post-Dive Equipment Care

By Jessica Macdonald



If you own scuba equipment, knowing how to properly take care of it after a dive is crucial.

Not only does good post-dive equipment care increase the lifespan of expensive equipment, but it also minimizes the risk of gear-related issues the next time you dive. Our equipment is our lifeline underwater, so keeping it in working order is of paramount importance. Basic rules apply to the post-dive maintenance of all scuba gear, including rinsing items thoroughly with fresh water after a dive, and allowing them to dry completely before being packed away. Dive gear should never be left in direct sunlight for prolonged periods of time, as sunlight can degrade, crack or fade materials, including neoprene and rubber. Specific considerations relate to particular pieces of equipment, most of which are listed below.

Guidelines for Post-Dive Equipment Care – Cont.

Regulator

Like the rest of your scuba equipment, your regulator needs to be rinsed in fresh water at the end of the day's diving. Make sure that no water enters the regulator's first stage, as its internal components are susceptible to damage when exposed to moisture –allowing them to get wet will most likely result in an expensive trip to an equipment technician. Before rinsing, replace and securely fasten your regulator's dust cap, first ensuring that the dust cap itself is dry. You can do this by using compressed air from your cylinder to blast excess water from the dust cap before fastening it in place, but that method's not without detractors.

Instead of leaving your first stage to soak in fresh water, rinse it thoroughly under the tap; this will safeguard against water seeping past the dust cap. Alternatively, you can fully submerge your regulator if the first stage is still attached to a pressurized cylinder, which will prevent any water from entering the system. Do not press the purge button on either your primary second stage or your octopus while you are washing your regulator, as this will also allow water to enter the first stage. If you have hose protectors, make sure that you rinse underneath them during the cleaning process; similarly, move your low-pressure inflator connector back and forth to remove any salt, grit or sand. This way, even the least visible parts of your regulator will be kept corrosion free, and will continue to perform as they should. Once you have finished rinsing your regulator, hang it up and allow it to dry completely before packing it away.

BCD

When it comes to washing your BCD, it's hugely important to remember the inside after having thoroughly rinsed the exterior. During a dive, salt water leaks into the BCD through the dump valves and the low-pressure inflator, and must be drained out during your post-dive maintenance routine. To do this, use a hose to flush fresh water into the BCD's bladder via the low-pressure inflator, making sure to hold down the deflate button as you do so. Allow the water to flow into the BCD until it is approximately one quarter full, and then orally inflate it. This will allow the water to easily circulate around the inside of the BCD. Then, shake it to make sure that the water reaches every part of the jacket before allowing the water to drain through the dump valves, simultaneously rinsing them too. You can repeat this process several times before inflating the BCD partially and storing it. Ideally, you should keep your BCD hung up in a cool, dry place; the partial inflation will prevent the insides of the BCD from sticking together.

Wetsuit, booties, hoods and gloves

All of these items should be washed both on the inside and on the outside. It's a good idea to use soap or disinfectant to eliminate any odors, but make sure that you buy one that's appropriate for use on neoprene. Wetsuit soap is readily available at most dive centers or equipment stores; rinse it off with more fresh water once used. After cleaning your wetsuit and other neoprene items, hang them up to dry completely before packing them away. If you don't, mildew and other bacteria will develop, degrading the quality of your equipment and causing it to smell. The best way to store a wetsuit is to hang it up, preferably on a purpose-built wetsuit hanger. Do not use wire hangers, as they will crease and mark your suit – the wider the hanger, the better. For transporting your suit or for storing it for short periods of time roll it rather than folding it. Folds can cause creases in the neoprene that may not come out, and make the suit uncomfortable to wear. It is also a good idea to lubricate the zips on your wetsuit or booties, ideally with zipper wax specifically made for this purpose.

Guidelines for Post-Dive Equipment Care – Cont.

Cylinder

Many divers overlook their cylinders when it comes to post-dive care, but they also need to be rinsed with fresh water. This prevents salt buildup and consequent corrosion, and also displaces grit and sand from around the tank valve; if left, these particles can make it difficult to turn your air on and off. You should never put a cylinder into storage either emptied or filled completely. When empty, the absence of pressure can make it easy for contaminants to enter the cylinder; if stored too full they can eventually crack over time. They should be stored lying horizontally, or in a secured upright position to prevent them from falling and becoming damaged.

Mask, fins and snorkel

Your soft gear is easily maintained; like everything else, it must be rinsed in fresh water, dried and put away carefully. Your mask should be packed in a hard case to protect the lenses from scratches and the mask itself from possible impact. Make sure that any other items that you store with your mask (e.g. dive computer, compass) do not bend, squish or deform the silicone; otherwise, your mask's shape could be altered causing it to leak or become uncomfortable. Similarly, save the plastic inserts that come with your fins when you buy them, and replace during storage to retain the shape of your fins' foot pockets. Do not store your fins by balancing them on their tips, as this can also cause distortion and diminished performance. Instead, keep them lying flat, or hung by the strap on a wide peg.

Accessories

Each of your dive accessories has unique care requirements. Underwater cameras, for example, have a lengthy post-dive care regime. They must be left to soak for as long as possible in fresh water, to allow all salt to dissolve from the housing. You should gently work all of the housing's moving parts to dislodge any salt, grit or sand stuck beneath them. Once you are satisfied that the housing is salt-free, you must dry it completely before opening it to remove your camera. You should remove your batteries and memory card from the camera, and make sure to wipe clean and lubricate all O-rings. Do not store your housing with the main body O-ring in place, as the constant pressure will eventually change the shape of the O-ring and reduce its ability to create a sufficient seal. Instead, remove the O-ring carefully, clean it and store it with the rest of your equipment in a sealed plastic bag. Strobes and underwater torches should be treated similarly - wash, dry, remove batteries, then clean and lubricate all O-ring.

When washing your dive computer, make sure to depress all the buttons while holding the computer underwater in order to flush salt deposits from beneath them. Rinse and dry dive knives thoroughly, then apply a thin coating of silicone grease to the blade before storage to prevent rusting. All other diving equipment, including signal marker buoys, compasses, whistles and octopus attachments should be rinsed at the same time as the rest of your gear, and stored appropriately.

No matter how diligently you take care of your equipment, make sure to fully check and test your gear before use to ensure that it's in full working order. Above all, remember that by properly looking after your dive equipment, you are allowing it to continue looking after you.

For more info, access the web link below.

<http://scubadiverlife.com/2014/06/18/guidelines-post-dive-equipment-care/>

Upcoming AUE Activities

- *AUE General Meeting - Saturday 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. March 19, 2016 - Fulton County/Atlanta Ponce De Leon Library, 980 Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. Meeting time is the 3:00 p.m. every 3rd Saturday of each month.*
- *NABS President's Meeting - Hosted by the Windy City Seals, Chicago, IL, Hyatt Place Chicago/Midway Airport, April 8th thru 10th 2016, Contact: Michele Dowdy at: micheledowy@yahoo.com - Web link for detail information: http://www.nabsdivers.org/images/Presents_the_Annual_Presidents_Meeting-2.pdf*
- *AUE General Meeting - Saturday 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. April 16, 2016 - Fulton County/Atlanta Ponce De Leon Library, 980 Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. Meeting time is the 3:00 p.m. every 3rd Saturday of each month.*
- *Cayman Islands Dive - April 23 -30, 2016, Contact: Roz Woolfolk (woolfolk_r@yahoo.com) or visit our Facebook page for more details. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1729351293960022/>*
- *AUE Annual Cookout June 2016 Details: TBA*
- *Coral Restoration Dives June, July & October 2016 Details: Contact Ken Stewart DWP*

Recent AUE Activities

- *Annual Crystal River Manatee Trip - February 19 - 21, 2016 at the Plantation Resort in Crystal River Florida.*
- *YMCA Youth Swim Team Scuba Training Elleen Yancey, AUE Originator, Jimi Mack & Alex Colvin, Dive Instructors. This in an ongoing youth activity for developing the next generation of scuba divers.*

Announcements

2016 NABS Summit Update:

The 2015 Summit was a wonderful experience for all who attended. This year's summit in Aruba should be equally as enjoyable. Registration has already begun at regular rates. Airfare is now reasonable so book early if you plan to attend.

See images from the 2015 event and next year's summit information on the AUE's and NABS Facebook pages.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ATLANTAUNDERWATEREXPLORERS/?fref=nf>



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Editor's Corner

Fellow AUE Members:

Welcome to the March 15, 2016 edition of *AUE Bubbles* newsletter. We hope you continue to find future editions informative. Your suggestions, comments and story ideas are always welcomed.

An active dive and social calendar is planned for 2016. Stay tuned and find us on the web at www.diveaue.org, on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ATLANTAUNDERWATEREXPLORERS> and via *AUE Bubbles*.

Story ideas are always welcomed. Completed story submissions must be received one week prior to the publishing date (Bi-monthly on the 15th of the month).

The next edition will be published March 15, 2016.

Please submit your story ideas and comments to my attention via email.

Dive safely,

Alex Adams,
Publisher & Editor
scuba1aja@gmail.com

www.diveaue.org