

## **PHYSICAL THERAPIST**

### **What does a physical therapist do?**

Physical therapists diagnose and treat patients who have medical problems or injuries that limit their abilities to move or function in their daily lives. Patients will typically come to a physical therapist after being referred by their primary physician. Physical therapists work with people who have experienced an injury or disease that has affected their movement and range of motion. A physical therapist will examine a patient then create a recovery plan. They often focus on treatments that reduce the need for surgery and prescriptive drugs. A physical therapist uses a combination of exercise, stretches, hands-on techniques, and equipment to restore function or relieve pain.

### **Scope of practice**

Physical therapists work with physical therapy assistants, educators, [social workers](#), [nurses](#), doctors, and surgeons to treat patients of all ages, from infants to the elderly. Common tasks and duties include:

- Diagnosing patients to determine a level of function by observing them stand, walk, and perform tasks, as well as listening to their concerns
- Designing an individualized care plan based on their observations of the patient, the patient's goals and expected outcomes, available research on the condition, and their medical expertise
- Evaluating the progress of the patient and adjusting care plans when necessary
- Developing and implementing plans to successfully discharge

### **Specializations**

With certification, physical therapists can specialize in a particular area, including:

- Cardiovascular and pulmonary
- Clinical electrophysiology
- Geriatrics
- Neurology
- Oncology
- Orthopedics
- Pediatrics
- Sports

### **Work environment**

Physical therapists work in hospitals, private practices, home health agencies, outpatient rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, schools, and medical clinics. They are on their feet for the majority of their working day, and often need to use their bodies to work with patients – including needing to lift or move them. A typical day shift, weekday work schedule can be expected, but some work settings may require evening or weekend hours.

# A Day in the Life of a Physical Therapist



Create PT treatment plans to improve or restore a patient's mobility and reduce pain



Continually reassess resource utilization as patient progresses towards goals




Test and measure patient's strength, range of motion, muscle performance



Examine patient's medical history



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