

Our physical therapists are highly educated, licensed health care professionals who help patients improve or restore mobility, and in many cases helping patients reduce pain, and avoid the need for surgery and the long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects.

We examine, evaluate, and treat patients whose conditions limit their ability to move and function in daily life. Your physical therapist's overall goal is to maintain, restore, or improve your mobility and help reduce your pain.

In most states, you can make an appointment with a physical therapist without a physician referral. Whether this is your first visit or you've been treated by a physical therapist in the past, there are things you can do to make your visit as successful as possible.

Before Your Visit:

1. Make a list of any questions that you might have, so that you can make the best use of your time with your physical therapist.
2. Write down any symptoms you've been having and for how long. If you have more than one symptom, begin with the one that is the most bothersome to you.
3. Make specific notes about your symptoms. For example, is your pain or other symptom:
 - Better or worse with certain activities or movements or with certain positions, such as sitting or standing?
 - More noticeable at certain times of day?
 - Relieved or made worse by resting?
4. Write down key information about your medical history, even if it seems unrelated to the condition for which you are seeing the physical therapist.
5. Make a list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and supplements that you are taking.
6. Make a note of any important personal information, including recent stressful events in your life.
7. Write down and describe any injuries, incidents, or environmental factors that you believe might have contributed to your condition.
8. Make a list of any medical conditions of your parents or siblings.
9. Consider taking a family member or trusted friend along to help you remember details from your own health history and to take notes about what is discussed during your visit.
10. Make sure you can see and hear as well as possible. If you wear glasses, take them with you. If you use a hearing aid, make certain that it is working well, and wear it. Tell your physical therapist and clinic staff if you have a hard time seeing or hearing. For example, you may want to say, "I have difficulty hearing. It's helpful to me when you speak slowly."
11. If available, bring any lab or diagnostic reports from other health care professionals who have treated you for your current condition.

12. Bring a list of the names of your physician and other health care professionals that you would like your physical therapist to contact regarding your evaluation and your progress.

13. When you call to make your appointment, ask whether you should wear or bring a certain type of clothing when you come for your first visit. You may want to avoid tight or formal clothes, in case the therapist wants you to engage in activities during the first session.

What to Expect During Your First Visit:

Your physical therapist will begin by asking you lots of questions about your health and about the specific condition you want the physical therapist to treat. Detailed information about you and your condition will help the physical therapist determine whether you are likely to benefit from physical therapy and which treatments are most likely to help you. Your physical therapist will perform a detailed examination. Depending on your symptoms and condition, the physical therapist might evaluate your strength, flexibility, balance, coordination, posture, and heart and respiration rates. Your physical therapist might use his or her hands to examine or "palpate" the affected area or to perform a detailed examination of the mobility of your joints, muscles, and other tissues.

Your physical therapist also might evaluate:

- How you walk ("gait")
- How you get up from a lying position or get in and out of a chair ("functional activities")
- How you use your body for certain activities, such as bending and lifting ("body mechanics").

Your physical therapist might ask you specific questions about your home or work environment, your health habits and activity level, and your leisure and recreational interests so that the therapist can help you become as active and independent as possible. Your physical therapist will work with you to determine your goals for physical therapy and will begin to develop a plan for your treatment. In many cases, the physical therapist will make a diagnosis and begin treatment almost immediately.

One of the main goals of treatment is almost always to improve your ability to do your daily tasks and activities. To reach this goal, the physical therapist may need to focus on pain, swelling, weakness, or limited motion. Your physical therapist will constantly assess your response to each treatment and will make adjustments as needed.

In most cases, an important aspect of your physical therapy treatment will be education. Your physical therapist might teach you special exercises to do at home. You might learn new and different ways to perform your activities at work and home. These new techniques can help minimize pain, lessen strain, avoid re-injury, and speed your recovery.

Your physical therapist will evaluate your need for special equipment, such as special footwear, splints, or crutches. If the evaluation indicates that you are at risk for falling, your physical therapist might recommend simple equipment to help make your home a safer place for you. The therapist will know what equipment you need and can either get

it for you or tell you where you can find it. If you do need special equipment, your physical therapist can show you how to use it properly.

Your physical therapist will communicate the important information from your examination to your physician and to other health care professionals at your request. Your physical therapist will continually recheck your progress and work with you to plan for your discharge from physical therapy when you are ready. Make sure you talk with your physical therapist about what you should do after discharge if you have questions or if your symptoms or condition should worsen.