



## WHAT ARE PHYSICAL THERAPISTS?

### *Physical Therapists (PTs):*

- Are professional members of a health care team who work with people of all ages limited by medical problems, birth defects or health-related conditions to restore their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.
- Evaluate, diagnose and treat their patients through therapeutic exercise, traction, electrical stimulation, hot packs or cold compresses, ultrasound and massage to improve their patients' comfort and aid in recovery.
- Develop care plans using treatment techniques that promote optimal health and overall fitness, reduce pain, restore and improve the body's function and movement, maintain cardiopulmonary function and limit disabilities resulting from injury or disease.
- Work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness and wellness programs that achieve healthier and more active lifestyles.
- Teach patients to use assistive and adaptive devices such as crutches, canes, walkers, prostheses and wheelchairs.
- Help patients attain maximum muscle strength and motor skills as well as accept and adjust to the limiting effects of their disabilities.
- Plan and execute exercises for increasing strength, endurance, coordination and range of motion.
- Motivate and instruct patients, families and other caregivers to help patients through the treatment and convalescent period.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of treatment with other health care team members to fine tune therapeutic procedures and treatments.

**Education and Clinical Experience:** A master's or doctor of physical therapy degree from a physical therapy program accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education. Physical therapy programs must include supervised clinical experience.

**Examination:** Pass the national physical therapy examination administered by the California Physical Therapy Board.

**Licensure:** Licensed by the California Physical Therapy Board.

### *Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs):*

Provide physical therapy services under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist.

**Education and Clinical Experience:** Physical therapy assistants must complete a two-year college program, including clinical experience, or meet the equivalency requirements established by the California Physical Therapy Board.

**Examination:** Pass the national physical therapist assistant examination administered by the California Physical Therapy Board.

**Licensure:** Licensed by the California Physical Therapy Board.



### *Where Physical Therapists Practice*

- Hospitals
- Outpatient clinics or offices
- Private practices
- Inpatient rehabilitation facilities
- Skilled nursing, extended care or sub-acute facilities
- Homes
- Education or research centers
- Schools
- Hospices
- Corporate or industrial workplaces or other occupational environments
- Fitness centers and sports training facilities

### *Physical Therapy Specialties*

- Pediatrics
- Geriatrics
- Orthopedics
- Sports
- Neurology
- Cardiopulmonary
- Women's health
- Clinical electrophysiology

### *Interaction With Other Health Care Professionals*

Physical therapists often consult and practice with a variety of other professionals such as physicians, dentists, nurses, psychologists, chiropractors, educators, social workers, occupational therapists, vocational counselors, speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

### *Find a Physical Therapist*

You can locate a physical therapist in your area on our Web site at [www.ccapta.org](http://www.ccapta.org). Enter the *Public* site and click on *Find-a-PT* in the navigation box on the left side of your screen.

### *Evaluating the Quality of Physical Therapy Services*

When evaluating the quality of the care you receive, you should be able to answer "yes" to each of the following:

- A physical therapist performed my evaluation.
- The physical therapist explained my treatment plan and/or goals.
- My concerns and treatment goals were addressed during the time I spent with the physical therapist.
- The physical therapy professional wore an identification badge showing his/her name and title, or the physical therapist's license was posted in a conspicuous place.
- My privacy was maintained.

### *Verifying a Physical Therapist's or Physical Therapist Assistant's License*

**Internet:** <http://www.ptb.ca.gov/consumer.htm>

**In Person:** Physical Therapy Board, 1418 Howe Avenue, Suite 16, Sacramento, CA, 95825

**Telephone:** (916) 561-8200