

WHAT IS PHYSICAL THERAPY?

Your knee has been hurting for three weeks. The medicine the doctor prescribed isn't working. Your co-workers have told you to use ice. Your in-laws said use heat. You have tried everything and nothing has worked. You tell your doctor you don't want surgery. The doctor just smiles and says, "I want you to try physical therapy." From what you have heard about physical therapy, you might be reconsidering surgery.

There are many misconceptions about physical therapy. Physical therapy was started to help soldiers returning from World War I. "Reconstruction Aides" were employed by the government to help wounded soldiers regain function when returning home with severe injuries. Since then the profession has grown. Physical therapists are responsible for a wide range of rehabilitation services.

When passing a test for licensure in the United States, therapists should be able to get a job in a nursing home, school system, hospital or free standing clinic. They are responsible for musculoskeletal disorders like sprains, strains and surgeries to repair bones and muscles. They can also work in neurological rehabilitation helping people who have had strokes, spinal cord injuries or traumatic brain injuries. In the school system, they are responsible for helping children with developing gross motor skills like crawling, walking, running, and jumping.

Very often when people go to physical therapy they are already in pain. Therapists try to help relieve the pain by using a variety of techniques. Sometimes they use machines, like ultrasound or electrical stimulation to treat the pain. Other times correcting the patient's posture is needed to relieve pain. Very often patients are given exercises to help strengthen and decrease the pain. The therapist is the person responsible for teaching the exercises, correcting the posture and administering treatment. Physical therapy may initially make you worse (especially if they are treating painful conditions) but continued progress is expected as they continuously re-evaluate your treatment program and goals.

In recent years the physical therapy profession has expanded their amount of knowledge and the ways they use to treat patients. New exercises are added frequently that help the therapist and the patient towards their final goal. Therapists and horses work together with children to decrease muscle rigidity in children with Cerebral Palsy. Many therapists are working together with doctors and scientists with new pharmaceutical delivery and treatment techniques to improve patients' ability to cope. We are constantly looking for new ways to improve our care and increase patient function.

Very often physical therapists can help decrease your pain and increase your function very quickly with just a few treatments. The quicker you get in to see a therapist, the quicker the healing process begins. So the next time you are hurting and your doctor suggests "Physical Therapy", take the suggestion and get to see one as quickly as you can.

FREE CONSULTATIONS ARE AVAILABLE AT EACH CLINIC WHICH WILL GIVE YOU AN IDEA IF PHYSICAL THERAPY WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR YOUR INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM