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Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life

## The Physical Therapist Assistant

Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) provide physical therapy services under the direction and supervision of a physical therapist. PTAs help people of all ages who have medical problems, or other health-related conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. They work in a variety of settings including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health, nursing homes, schools, sports facilities, and more.

PTAs must complete a 2-year associate's degree and are licensed, certified, or registered in most states. Care provided by a PTA may include teaching patients/clients exercise for mobility, strength and coordination, training for activities such as walking with crutches, canes, or walkers, massage, and the use of physical agents and electrotherapy such as ultrasound and electrical stimulation.

### WHAT DO PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS EARN?

The median income for a physical therapist assistant is \$46,000 depending on position, years of experience, degree of education, geographic location, and practice setting.

### WHERE DO PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS WORK?

Today, PTAs provide health care services to patients of all ages and health conditions in a variety of settings, including:

- Outpatient clinics or offices
- Hospitals
- Inpatient rehabilitation facilities
- Skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities
- Homes
- Education or research centers
- Schools
- Hospices
- Industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments
- Fitness centers and sports training facilities

### WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A PTA?

To work as a PTA, an individual must graduate with an associate degree (two years, usually five semesters) from an accredited PTA program at a technical or community college, college, or university. Graduates must pass the national examination for licensing/certification/regulation in most states to be eligible to work. PTAs work under the direction of a physical therapist (PT).

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The PTA's duties can include assisting in instructing patients in exercises and activities of daily living (including physical modalities), using special equipment, collecting data on the patient's progress, and documenting and reporting on the patient's response. There are currently 235 institutions supporting 252 PTA programs across the country.

### **WHAT ARE THE LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A PTA?**

Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia require PTAs to be licensed, registered, or certified. States requiring licensure stipulate specific educational and examination criteria.

### **WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS?**

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), employment is expected to grow much faster than average because of increasing demand for physical therapy services. Job prospects for physical therapist assistants are expected to be very good. The American Physical Therapy Association's (APTA's) most recent data indicate an unemployment rate of 3.9 percent.

APTA represents more than 74,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Its purpose is to improve the health and quality of life of individuals through the advancement of physical therapist practice, education, and research. In most states, patients can make an appointment directly with a physical therapist, without a physician referral. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat and find a physical therapist in your area at [www.moveforwardpt.com](http://www.moveforwardpt.com). Join us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



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