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Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life

The Physical Therapist

Physical therapists, or PTs, are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility — in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects.

PTs examine each individual and develop a plan, using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

Physical therapists provide care for people in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, schools, sports and fitness facilities, work settings, and nursing homes. State licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices.

All PTs must receive a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapist program before taking the national licensure examination that allows them to practice. The majority of programs offer the doctor of physical therapy (DPT) degree.

WHAT DO PHYSICAL THERAPISTS EARN?

More than 175,000 physical therapists are licensed in the U.S. today. The median salary for a physical therapist is \$80,000 depending on position, years of experience, degree of education, geographic location, and practice setting.

WHERE DO PHYSICAL THERAPISTS PRACTICE?

Although many physical therapists practice in hospitals, over 80 percent practice in:

- Outpatient clinics or offices
- 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

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WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A PT?

The minimum educational requirement is a post-baccalaureate degree from an accredited education program. While some programs offer a master's degree, a growing majority of programs offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Currently, 199 colleges and universities nationwide support 212 accredited professional physical therapist education programs; 96% now offer the DPT and the remaining programs are planning to convert.

WHAT ARE THE LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A PT?

After graduation, candidates must pass a state-administered national exam. Other requirements for physical therapy practice vary from state to state according to physical therapy practice acts or state regulations governing physical therapy.

WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR PHYSICAL THERAPISTS?

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), employment of physical therapists is expected to grow by 30 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), with just a 0.2 percent unemployment rate, physical therapists are now experiencing the best employment conditions since enactment of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

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. Join us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

