What is a PHYSICAL THERAPIST?

BENEFITS OF DIRECT ACCESS TO PHYSICAL THERAPIST SERVICES

- Patient choice
- Eliminates unnecessary physician visits
- Reduces costs and patient frustrations caused by delays in initiating care
- Improves accessibility to rehabilitative services

BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Increase and maintain muscle strength, balance and flexibility
- Restore normal movement for standing, walking, running
- Improve coordination
- Decrease pain
- Reduce swelling and inflammation of joints
- Promote health and wellness
- Return patient to prior level of physical function and mobility
- Promote wound healing

California Physical Therapy Association

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROFESSION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>LICENSURE / REQUIREMENTS</th>
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| PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT)          | • Experts in human movement who examine, diagnose movement impairments and treat individuals with conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities  
• Restore, maintain and promote overall fitness, health and wellness | • Post-graduate physical therapy education                                                                                                     | • Doctoral degree required for graduation  
• Graduate from a CAPTE-accredited physical therapy program  
• Pass national licensure exam  
• Post-graduate specialist certification available through American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS)  
• Continuing education required to maintain licensure |
| PHYSICIAN (MD/DO)                | • Diagnose and treat disease, illness and injury  
• Perform physical exams, obtain medical histories and order, perform and interpret diagnostic tests  
• MD – Doctor of Medicine or allopathic physicians  
• DO – Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, special emphasis on the musculoskeletal system, preventive medicine and holistic patient care | • Post-graduate medical education  
• MDs – three plus additional years of post-graduate training for specialty  
• DOs – two plus years of post-graduate training for specialty | • Graduate from an accredited medical school  
• Pass state licensure examination  
• Post-graduate specialist certification available through the American Board of Medical Specialists (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA)  
• Continuing medical education required to maintain licensure |
| PODIATRIST (DPM)                 | • Diagnose and treat disorders, diseases and injuries of the foot, ankle and lower leg | • Three to four years of undergraduate study  
• Four years at a college of podiatric medicine  
• Two to four years of residency training for specialty and surgery | • Graduate from an accredited podiatric medical school  
• Pass state licensure examination  
• Post-graduate specialist certification available through the American Board of Medical Specialists (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA)  
• Continuing medical education required to maintain licensure |
| OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (OT)      | • Provide skilled treatment for people who suffer from mental, physical, developmental or emotional conditions to develop, recover or maintain daily living and work skills | • Post-graduate occupational therapy education                                               | • Graduate from an accredited occupational therapy program  
• Master’s degree required for graduation  
• Pass a national exam  
• Continuing education required to maintain licensure |
| CHIROPRACTOR (DC)               | • Diagnose and treat patients with health problems of the musculoskeletal system, perform spinal manipulation or adjustment based on the principle that spinal misalignment interferes with the nervous system | • At least three years of undergraduate education  
• Completion of a four-year chiropractic college program | • Complete a four-year program at an accredited chiropractic college  
• Pass national licensure exam  
• Continuing education required to maintain licensure |
| PHYSICIAN’S ASSISTANT (PA)       | • Support physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries  
• Provide diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive health care services as delegated by a physician  
• Work under the supervision of a physician | • Two-year, full-time PA educational program  
• Most applicants to PA educational programs hold a bachelor’s degree | • Complete an accredited, formal education program  
• Pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam  
• Recertification exam or completion of an alternative program combining learning experiences and a take-home exam required every six years  
• Continuing education required to maintain licensure |
| ATHLETIC TRAINER (AT OR ATC)     | • Specialize in working with athletes, under the direction of a physician, to treat muscle and bone injuries resulting from athletic injury in an athletic setting | • Undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited program                            | • Complete an accredited athletic training curriculum  
• Licensure or regulation is not required in all states – unlicensed in California  
• Can volunteer to take the national certification exam administered by the Board of Certification (BOC)  
• Many states require athletic trainers to pass national certification exam  
• Continuing education required by most states to maintain licensure, if licensure is required |
| PERSONAL TRAINER (NO DESIGNATION)| • Design exercise routines and teach exercises to their clients  
• Lead, instruct and motivate individuals or groups in exercise activities  
• Help clients assess their level of physical fitness and set and reach fitness goals | • Education and training required depends on the specific type of fitness work | • No national certification exists  
• Fitness facilities may require formal fitness training as a requirement of employment |
| MASSAGE THERAPIST (MT OR CMT)    | • Massage therapy is used as a means of addressing painful ailments, relieving tired and overworked muscles, reducing stress and promoting general health through manipulation of the soft tissues of the body | • Training standards and requirements vary greatly by state concentrating on certain modalities of massage | • Training standards and requirements vary greatly by state and locality  
• Can volunteer to take a National Certification Examination or Licensing exam  
• Many states require therapists pass the National Certification or Licensing exam to practice massage therapy |

Source of Information: U.S. Department of Labor, Department of Labor Statistics, National Athletic Trainer’s Association Website, Board of Certification Website