

Physiotherapy can help you:

- Become stronger & more flexible
- Increase freedom of movement & mobility
- Stay active, reduce pain, and
- Prevent injury.

What is physiotherapy?

Physiotherapy is the treatment and prevention of physical injuries and movement problems.

Education and preventative measures help patients gain the highest possible level of independent function.

A physiotherapist is sometimes called a physical therapist. The term means the same thing.

Physiotherapy is an established, respected and evidence-based profession, which uses scientifically proven techniques to help many conditions affecting your body, including:

- Spinal and joint conditions such as arthritis
- Post-accident treatment and rehabilitation
- Back and neck pain
- Problems affecting children, including cerebral palsy and spina bifida
- Cancer and palliative care
- Pregnancy related problems such as back pain
- Stress incontinence
- Work-related injuries
- Heart and lung conditions such as asthma, obstructive airways diseases (COPD), and other breathing difficulties
- Sports injuries
- Brain injuries (e.g. strokes) and other neurological problems

Where does Physiotherapy fit into your health care?

Physiotherapists work in a wide range of settings and with other health care providers. Patients may be sent to a physiotherapist by their doctor or dentist or may be able to access physiotherapy directly on their own. Physiotherapy patients range from babies and children to adults and seniors.

Why should I see a Physiotherapist?

Some of the more common problems a Physiotherapist helps with are the treatment of:

- injuries such as strains and sprains which require immediate care for swelling, tenderness and pain etc.
- rehabilitation of muscles after fractures or other injuries
- neurological problems, e.g. stroke, Parkinson's, head injuries
- cardio-respiratory illness e.g. emphysema, cystic fibrosis, heart attack, etc.
- jaw problems

What training do Physiotherapists have?

Physiotherapists must complete a university program and meet strict standards before practicing. A Physiotherapist must have a license to practice physiotherapy.

PHYSIOTHERAPY – WHAT TO EXPECT?

When you see a physiotherapist, he or she will complete a thorough assessment that may include your health history, evaluation of pain and movement patterns, strength, joint range of motion, reflexes, sensation and cardiorespiratory status. They will also examine relevant x-rays, laboratory tests, medical records and surgical notes. Based on this assessment, the physiotherapist develops a diagnosis and works in partnership with you to plan individualized goals and treatment programs.

Physiotherapists **promote independence**, including emphasis on how you can help yourself. For example, you may be shown exercises that you can do between treatment sessions and how to set goals to achieve results. Where appropriate, physiotherapists also advise care-givers on how they can help you.

PHYSIOTHERAPY – WHAT CAN THE TREATMENT INVOLVE?

Some treatment options:

- Strengthening and therapeutic exercise programmes
- Mobility and flexibility improvement
- Improvements in muscle imbalances and alignment
- Balance retraining and movement coordination
- Manual therapy – intervention to reduce pain and stiffness
- Electrical modalities such as TENS (electrical nerve stimulation) or ultrasound
- Gait retraining and general conditioning regimes
- Acupuncture – some specially trained physiotherapists use this technique to help alleviate your pain

PHYSIOTHERAPY – IS A PHYSICIAN REFERRAL REQUIRED?

Physiotherapists are primary care practitioners offering direct access to physiotherapy services without the need for physician referral. It's important to note that some extended health insurance plans require a physician's referral in order to re-imburse you for claims.

PHYSIOTHERAPY – FACTS!

The benefits of physiotherapy are supported by evidence documented through extensive research literature. The Physiotherapy Facts (listed below) presented by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association, provide snippets of information about what physiotherapy can do for you as a health care consumer. These facts are supported by research. For those wishing to investigate further, references appear below:

Fact #1

Quicker return to work -- For patients with a new episode of low back pain, prompt access to physiotherapy is cost and time effective. More than 70% of patients required only a single clinic visit and less than 5% needed to be referred to a specialist. (Pinnington, Miller, & Stanley, 2004)¹

(1) Pinnington MA, Miller J, Stanley I. An evaluation of prompt access to physiotherapy in the management of low back pain in primary care. *Family Practice* 2004 Aug;21(4):372-80.

Fact #2

Reduced waiting times -- Access to physiotherapy in primary health care models decreases patient wait times – physiotherapists reported less than one week from referral to first appointment (Cott, Devitt, Falter L.-B., Soever, & Wong, 2004)² (

2) Cott CA, Devitt R, Falter LB, Soever L, Wong R. Adult rehabilitation and primary health care in Ontario. Arthritis Community Research & Evaluation Unit (ACREU). Working Paper (04-1), 2004.

Fact #3

Improved outcomes – Use of physiotherapy following hip replacement surgery is proven to decrease the cost of care and speed up discharge home. (Freburger, 2000; Freburger, 1999; Freburger & Hurley, 2000)3-5

(3) Freburger JK. An analysis of the relationship between the utilization of physical therapy services and outcomes of care for patients after total hip arthroplasty. *Physical Therapy* 2000 May;80(5):448-58.

(4) Freburger JK. Analysis of the relationship between the utilization of physical therapy services and outcomes for patients with acute stroke. *Physical Therapy* 1999 Oct;79(10):906-18.

(5) Freburger JK, Hurley RE. Ancillary service utilization in academic health center hospitals: use of physical therapy for the treatment of stroke and hip arthroplasty. *Journal of Clinical Outcomes Management* 2000;7(8):20-6. The above information plus more can be found on the Canadian Physiotherapy web site at <http://www.physiotherapy.ca>.

PHYSIOTHERAPY – WHO OVERSEES PHYSIOTHERAPISTS?

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