

# Physical Therapist



## Nature of the Profession

Physical therapy is an integral part of the health care system. As a member of a multidisciplinary group of health personnel, the physical therapist plays a unique role in helping individuals overcome the effects of disease, injury and developmental abnormalities. Physical therapists evaluate and treat patients who have problems with movement that impair normal function. Physical therapists assess joint motion, muscle strength and endurance, heart and lung function, and the performance of activities required in daily living. Treatment includes therapeutic exercise, cardiovascular endurance training, and rehabilitation in the activities of daily living. Physical therapists work in many health care settings including hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing homes, home care agencies, schools, and rehabilitation centers. Therapists may elect to practice as generalists, or they may choose one of a number of specialty areas such as orthopedics, geriatrics, neurology, pediatrics, or cardiopulmonary physical therapy. In addition to patient care, physical therapists have many opportunities in administration, research and clinical education.

## Aptitudes

- Ability to learn the complex sciences on which physical therapy is based
- Good verbal skills to talk with patients, read technical materials, and write reports
- Good space and form perception, manual dexterity, and general coordination
- Ability to relate to a variety of people and direct and influence others
- Ability to make judgments based on data and observations and take responsibility for planning programs
- Emotional stability, creativity, patience, and understanding

## Education

The minimum educational requirement is a professional master's (MPT) or doctoral (DPT) degree in physical therapy. Most programs require 3 or 4 years of undergraduate preparation followed by 2 to 3 years of professional education.

## Certification

An applicant for a license to practice physical therapy must graduate from an approved physical therapy education program and pass the national licensure examination.

## Annual Mean Wage

\$91,501

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