



PT For Future Me Patient Toolkit

Learn how physical therapy can be a powerful lifelong tool to help you take control of how you age, no matter your needs or abilities, by promoting resilience, preserving mobility, and building strength through a personalized health and wellness plan.

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Why Physical Therapy?

Have you ever wished you could go back and give your future self some advice? The truth is, the actions you take today can shape the life you live in five, 10, or even 50 years. It's never too early or too late to make physical therapy part of your health routine. Physical therapy isn't just about relieving today's aches and pains; it's an investment in your future. It helps you stay mobile, strong, and pain-free through a personalized health and wellness plan suited to your individual needs and abilities, so you can keep reaching your life goals both now and down the road.

What Is Physical Therapy?

Physical therapy is personalized treatment and preventive care provided by licensed physical therapists and physical therapist assistants. It helps people of all ages and abilities move and function better, manage pain and long-term health conditions, and recover from or prevent injuries and chronic disease.

Who Are Physical Therapists?

Physical therapists are doctorate-trained, licensed health care professionals who are trained to:

- Diagnose and treat movement and function problems
- Create personalized care plans tailored to your individual needs, abilities, and goals
- Empower you to take an active role in your health
- Help you move, feel, and live better — no matter your age or ability

Who Are Physical Therapist Assistants?

Physical therapist assistants are licensed health care providers who provide care under a physical therapist's direction and supervision. They are crucial members of a patient's care team, implementing treatment plans, recording patient progress, and documenting their findings to report back to the physical therapist. Physical therapist assistants may:

- Teach exercises prescribed by a physical therapist to improve movement, strength, and coordination
- Provide other prescribed treatments to relieve pain, aid healing, and promote better movement

- ✓ Relieve pain and recover from injuries or surgery
- ✓ Improve mobility, flexibility, and balance
- ✓ Manage chronic diseases or movement disorders
- ✓ Support recovery during pregnancy and postpartum
- ✓ Prevent injuries and stay active at every age
- ✓ Enhance performance for work, fitness, or play

Who Can Benefit From Physical Therapy?

Everyone! Physical therapy is for every age, stage, and ability — whether you're recovering from injury, managing chronic conditions, trying a new activity, enhancing mobility, or simply investing in long-term health and independence. It supports your health span at every step.





Physical Therapy Across the Lifespan

Childhood & Adolescence

Physical therapy, through personalized health plans, supports children at every stage of growth, helping them build strength, confidence, and health habits that last a lifetime, no matter individual needs or abilities.

"I want to support my child's strength, mobility, and skills development ..."

"I want my teen to move more, feel better, and build healthy habits that support physical and mental health ..."

Why Physical Therapy Matters for Children and Teens

Physical therapy helps children improve their movement, function, and overall health. Whether your child is recovering from an injury, managing a chronic condition, or working to meet developmental milestones, physical therapy can make a meaningful difference.

Pediatric physical therapists are experts in motor development and movement. They work closely with families, caregivers, and educators in schools to create personalized care plans that promote independence, prevent injury, and enhance participation in everyday activities — from school to sports to play.

How Physical Therapy Helps Young People Thrive

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help children and teens:

- ✓ Develop motor skills like balance and coordination
- ✓ Reach important milestones and increase mobility
- ✓ Gain independence in everyday activities
- ✓ Join in more at school, play, and community life
- ✓ Build strength and endurance for daily activities and sports
- ✓ Promote overall health and wellness

Examples of Common Specialty Areas in Childhood and Adolescence May Include:

- **Pediatric Physical Therapy:** Focuses on growth, motor skills, and functional movement
- **Neurologic Physical Therapy:** Addresses conditions affecting the brain and nerves
- **Sports Physical Therapy:** Supports young athletes recovering from injury and optimizing performance



Physical therapists can be visited directly without a referral in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Take the next step to support your child's health and development. Visit ChoosePT.com/find-a-pt to find a physical therapist near you.

Physical Therapy Across the Lifespan

Early Adulthood



Early adulthood is a time of transformation, marked by personal growth, increased independence, and often major life milestones. During this dynamic phase, physical therapy can play a key role in helping young adults stay strong, active, and pain-free.

"I want to play soccer competitively through college ..."

"I want to feel my best postpartum ..."

"I want to start running marathons ..."

Why Physical Therapy Matters for People in Early Adulthood

Physical therapy empowers young adults to stay ahead of potential issues before they interfere with daily life. Whether managing new physical demands or recovering from strain or injury, working with a physical therapist provides personalized strategies to move better, feel stronger, and stay active through all of life's transitions.

How Physical Therapy Helps Young Adults Thrive

As many young adults enter the workforce, they take on new physical demands. Some spend long hours at a desk, while others are on their feet throughout the day. No matter the job, maintaining mobility and physical wellness is essential. Physical therapy can help reduce discomfort, improve posture and movement, and support long-term health.

Outside of work, young adults often pursue active lifestyles — training for sports, working out at the gym, or setting personal fitness goals. Physical therapy supports these efforts by building strength, improving performance, and helping prevent injury. It's for getting stronger, moving better, and staying in the game longer.

This phase of life may bring major milestones, including starting a family. Pregnancy and postpartum recovery involve significant physical changes. Physical therapy helps expecting and new mothers feel stronger, manage pain, and prepare their bodies for childbirth and recovery. It can relieve low back and pelvic pain, offer safe exercise guidance, reduce the risk of leakage, and support emotional well-being.

Examples of Common Specialty Areas in Early Adulthood May Include:

- **Sports Physical Therapy:** Supports young athletes recovering from injury and optimizing performance
- **Pelvic and Women's Health Physical Therapy:** Improves pelvic floor strength and decreases pain
- **Orthopaedic Physical Therapy:** Provides physical rehabilitation for people with pain, injury, or disease of the muscles, bones, or joints that limit mobility



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Physical Therapy Across the Lifespan

Middle Adulthood

For adults in their 40s to early 60s, life is full — career, family, and future plans all compete for time and energy. But physical challenges like pain and limited mobility can make it harder to keep up. Physical therapy helps people in middle adulthood stay strong and active so they can keep living the life they've built.

"I want to walk my daughter down the aisle without pain ..."

"I want to explore new places and travel comfortably ..."

"I want to dominate the court in my recreational pickleball league ..."

Why Physical Therapy Matters for People in Middle Adulthood

As the body begins to show signs of aging, now is the perfect time to invest in your health. Physical therapy goes beyond recovery — it's a proactive strategy to maintain vitality, extend longevity, and improve quality of life. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants can help people achieve the recommended amount of physical activity to help prevent or manage heart disease, diabetes, depression, and even some cancers.

How Physical Therapy Helps Adults Thrive

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help people:

- ✓ Build strength and flexibility
- ✓ Manage pain without opioids or other pain medications
- ✓ Avoid or delay surgeries
- ✓ Improve bone health
- ✓ Stay fit for work, family, and everyday life

Examples of Common Specialty Areas in Middle Adulthood May Include:

- **Neurologic Physical Therapy:** Addresses conditions affecting the brain, spinal cord, and nerves
- **Pelvic and Women's Health Physical Therapy:** Improves pelvic floor strength, decreases pain, and addresses osteoporosis
- **Orthopaedic Physical Therapy:** Provides physical rehabilitation for people with pain, injury, or diseases of the muscles, bones, or joints that limit mobility and addresses osteoporosis
- **Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy:** Provides prevention and rehabilitation care for people who are at risk for, or diagnosed with, heart, lung, and other health conditions
- **Oncologic Physical Therapy:** Addresses cancer-related problems during and after treatment



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Physical Therapy Across the Lifespan

Older Adulthood



As we age, new health challenges can arise and strength can decline. Physical therapy helps improve function, encourage activity, and prevent injuries — empowering older adults to maintain independence and a high quality of life.

“I want to keep up with my grandkids ...”

“I want to avoid falls ...”

“I want to manage my chronic pain without relying on opioids or prescription pain medications.”

Why Physical Therapy Matters for People in Older Adulthood

Living a full, independent life often means staying active and confident, but for many older adults, the fear of falling — or even a fall itself — can significantly diminish their quality of life, leading to injury or a loss of independence. Physical therapy can improve balance, muscle strength, and endurance can help to reduce the risk for falls.

Beyond falls, the challenges of frailty — which can leave muscles weak and energy low — and the impact of stroke or chronic disease, can severely limit movement and function, and threaten independence. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help improve strength, flexibility, balance, and aerobic capacity (ability of the heart and lungs to get oxygen to muscles).

How Physical Therapy Helps Older Adults Thrive

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help older adults:

- ✓ Boost balance and prevent falls
- ✓ Maintain independence and mobility
- ✓ Stay active and engaged in the things they enjoy
- ✓ Manage chronic pain
- ✓ Improve strength and endurance for daily life

Examples of Common Specialty Areas in Older Adulthood May Include:

- **Geriatrics Physical Therapy:** Focuses on improving function and quality of life for older adults
- **Neurologic Physical Therapy:** Addresses conditions affecting the brain such as Parkinson's, stroke, ALS, MS, and nerves
- **Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Physical Therapy:** Provides prevention and rehabilitation care for people who are at risk for, or diagnosed with, heart, lung, and other health conditions
- **Orthopaedic Physical Therapy:** Provides physical rehabilitation for people with pain, injury, or diseases of the muscles, bones, or joints that limit mobility and addresses osteoporosis



Physical therapists can be visited directly without a referral in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Take the next step to maintain your health and independence. Visit ChoosePT.com/find-a-pt to find a physical therapist near you.

Patient Discussion Guide

Patient & Caregiver Conversation Starters for Your Physical Therapy Visit

Preparing for your physical therapy appointment is a great step toward taking charge of your health and mobility. To make the most of your visit, write down any questions you have and note your symptoms and medical history. This is also an opportunity to learn about prevention, wellness, and ways to improve strength and movement, helping you stay active in work, life, and play.

Use this guide during your next appointment and visit ChoosePT.com/future-me for additional resources.

Questions to Ask Your Physical Therapist:

1. How long before I can expect to see improvement?
2. Will physical therapy alone be enough to resolve my issue?
3. Which exercises should I be doing at home and how often?
4. Are there any activities I should avoid?
5. What daily habits can support my recovery?
6. How will I know when I'm ready to return to [work/sports/daily activities]?
7. What can I do to prevent this problem from returning?
8. Do I need any special equipment (braces, supports, etc.)?
9. Are there any areas of weakness or imbalance I should be aware of?
10. How often should I see a physical therapist, and for how long?
11. What are the next steps in my therapy plan?

Tips to get the most out of physical therapy:

- ✓ Keep all your appointments
- ✓ Follow your physical therapist's instructions carefully
- ✓ Complete your home exercise program regularly
- ✓ Stick to your after-care plan to maintain progress

Infographic

Download Infographic

Build a Stronger, Healthier Future You



From first steps to your later years, physical therapy helps you stay strong, mobile, and ready for whatever comes next. Want to live a stronger, healthier life? Physical therapy can help. "PT for Future Me," a new ChoosePT campaign brought to you by the American Physical Therapy Association, highlights physical therapy's many roles across the lifespan.

Childhood & Adolescence

Physical therapy supports children of all ages and abilities, helping them build strength, confidence, and healthy habits that can last a lifetime.



Early Adulthood

Whether staying active and exercising, recovering from injuries, or preparing for major life changes like pregnancy or childbirth, young adults can turn to physical therapy to move better, feel stronger, reduce discomfort, prevent injuries, and support their overall well-being.



Middle Adulthood

Physical therapy helps adults manage pain and mobility concerns so they can stay strong, active, and fully engaged in the lives they're building.



Older Adulthood

Staying active and confident is vital for aging well. Physical therapy helps older adults prevent and overcome falls and live better with chronic conditions, so they can stay mobile and independent and fully enjoy the moments that matter.



ChoosePT
Provided by APTA

A physical therapist can create a personalized health and wellness plan to suit your individual needs and abilities. Visit ChoosePT.com/future-me to find a physical therapist and get started.