



Kid's Sports Corner

at Children's Orthopaedics of Atlanta

PRIMARY CARE SPORTS MEDICINE NEWS

JUNE 2011

Why Physical Therapy?

BY: * Keith May, PT, DPT, SCS, ATC, CSCS

What is Physical Therapy? Physical therapy is an allied health profession aimed to enhance and restore function to those with physical impairments or disabilities. Physical Therapy is concerned with maximizing quality of life through the realms of health promotion, injury prevention, and rehabilitation.

One who practices physical therapy is known as a physical therapist (PT). A PT will treat individuals of all ages who have medical problems or other health-related conditions, illnesses or injuries that limit their ability to move, perform daily activities or sports.

PT's 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. PT's also practice in non-patient care roles such as health policy, health insurance and health care administration.



Training and Qualifications A PT's education includes foundational and behavioral based science courses, clinically based courses, and supervised internship experiences. Until 2004, a PT could earn a four-year degree in physical therapy. Today, the minimum requirement for a PT is a master's degree from an accredited physical therapy program. In fact, 206 of 213 accredited physical therapy programs in the United States are accredited at the doctoral level offering a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree (DPT). All states regulate the practice of physical therapy by requiring each

therapist to pass a national examination and to hold a license in the state in which they practice. PT's are expected to continue their professional development by participating in continuing education courses or workshops.



The body of knowledge of physical therapy is quite large so it is common to see a PT specialize in a specific clinical area. The American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties lists eight specialist certifications:

- Cardiovascular and Pulmonary
- Clinical Electrophysiology
- Geriatric
- Integumentary
- Neurological
- Orthopaedic
- Pediatric
- Sports
- Women's Health

How do I see a Physical Therapist? The physical therapy profession is widely direct access; meaning that an individual can make an appointment with a PT directly. However, in the state of Georgia, services are only directly provided for the purpose of fitness, wellness, or prevention. Treatment related to an injury or ailment requires a referral from a medical provider (e.g. primary care physician or orthopaedic surgeon).

What to expect The physical therapy process includes an evaluation/assessment, treatment and an outcomes assessment.

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- Evaluation/assessment: the patient is assessed for impairments, activity limitations, participation restrictions or disabilities by history taking, screening and the use of specific tests and measures.
- Treatment: After examining a patient, the PT will develop a treatment plan that describes the treatment strategy, its purpose and anticipated outcome. Treatment includes exercise for patients who have been immobilized, lack flexibility, strength or endurance. They encourage patients to use their muscles to further increase flexibility and range of motion before finally advancing to exercises

- Outcomes: As treatment continues, PT's document progress, conduct periodic examinations, consult with the referring physician and modify treatments when necessary. Such documentation is used to track the patient's progress, and identify areas requiring more or less attention. Physical therapy is designed to be a dynamic process in that adjustments are made to facilitate optimal recovery.

A physical therapy clinic is similar to a gym environment. It will contain various cardiovascular and strength equipment; as well as treatment tables for "hands on" care. Come prepared to exercise and to see other patients of varying injuries and ailments performing their individualized programs.

Do I really need Physical Therapy?

Injury management is often beyond the scope of the fitness industry. Online exercise programs are meant to be general recommendations and copying a friend's program with the same diagnosis is not recommended since it was written specifically for them. A PT program is a prescription or personalized plan taking into consideration your pain, your current fitness level, your time constraints, and your diagnosis.



thus improving strength, balance, coordination and endurance. Their goal is to improve how an individual functions at work, at home or while playing sports. PT's also use electrical stimulation, hot packs or cold compresses, and ultrasound to relieve pain and reduce swelling. They may use traction, deep-tissue massage or joint manipulation to relieve pain. Therapists also teach patients to use assistive and adaptive devices such as crutches, prostheses and wheelchairs. They may also show patients exercises to do at home and provide handouts to expedite their recovery.

* Keith May is the Clinical Outcomes Project Manager for the Sports Medicine Program at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Notes:

Meet our team of Sports Professionals

at Children's Orthopaedics of Atlanta

For appointments, call 678.686.6800

5445 Meridian Mark Road . Suite 250 . Atlanta, GA 30342

www.childrensortho.com



Michael T. Busch, MD

Board Certified Pediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon
Director of Sports Medicine and Arthroscopic Surgery
Specialty Certificate in Sports Medicine

Dr. Busch can be contacted at 678.686.6820



David L. Marshall, MD

Board Certified General Pediatrician
Board Certified in Sports Medicine
Medical Director /Sports Medicine Program

Dr. Marshall can be contacted at 678.686.6820



William Primos, MD

Board Certified General Pediatrician
Board Certified in Sports Medicine

Dr. Primos can be contacted at 678.686.6820

J. Brian Kelly, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

Nancy Kralovich, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

Rebecca Lunsford, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

Lynda Palmer, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

Ashley Thomas, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

W. Ed Wilson, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

Derek Zefo, PA-C
Certified Physician Assistant

Stephanie Detamore, CPNP
Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

David Kloehs, M.Ed., AT-C
Certified Athletic Trainer