

## How Can a Physical Therapist Help You?

Physical therapists are experts in restoring and improving motion, in many cases helping prevent surgery or the need for long-term use of prescription pain medication. Because of their understanding of pre-existing conditions, physical therapists focus on the vital skills necessary to overcome an injury, secondary condition, or disability. They can help transition you from rehabilitation to a lifetime of physical activity and wellness, thereby empowering you to greatly improve your quality of life.

### Physical therapists can also help by:

- Working with you and your health care team to help prevent injury;
- Teaching you (and your caregivers and exercise partners) ways to safely move from one surface to another, whether using exercise machines at the gym or exercising at home;
- Collaborating with an existing community fitness provider to ensure a safe and effective individualized exercise program;
- Helping you avoid falls\* through appropriate exercise and lifestyle modifications;
- Helping you understand and address symptoms that may arise when you increase your activity level or attempt a new exercise;
- Teaching you how to avoid pressure sores or recognizing them early so that you may prevent long absences from physical activity.

\*Falls risk includes being above age 65; balance or walking difficulty; poor vision; leg or trunk weakness; pre-existing medical conditions (i.e. Parkinson's, stroke, diabetes); being on more than four medications at a time; using an assistive walking device; and having a history of falls.

### How to Locate a Physical Therapist

In most states, you can make an appointment directly with a physical therapist. Learn more about conditions physical therapists treat and how to find a licensed physical therapist in your area by going to [www.moveforwardpt.com](http://www.moveforwardpt.com) and clicking on "Find a PT."



## American Physical Therapy Association

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TDD: 703/683-6748  
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[www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national professional organization that represents physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Consumers are encouraged to follow us on Twitter (@MoveForwardPT) and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/move4wardpt](http://www.facebook.com/move4wardpt).

## National Center on Physical Activity and Disability

1640 West Roosevelt Road  
Chicago, IL 60608  
800/900-8086 or 312/355-4066  
Fax: 312/355-4058  
[ncpad@uic.edu](mailto:ncpad@uic.edu)  
[www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)

The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) is a national nonprofit organization that provides a variety of information and resources to enable people with disabilities and chronic conditions become as physically active as they choose to be.

# APTA/NCPAD

A collaboration between the American Physical Therapy Association in with the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability

## Physical Therapy *Bridging the Gap*



*Between Rehabilitation and  
the Community*

# Get moving

*Physical Activity is for Everybody!*

## Value of Physical Activity

Physical activity has enormous benefits for everyone. It gives us a chance to have fun, be with friends and family, enjoy the outdoors, improve our personal appearance, and heighten our level of fitness so that we may participate in more intensive physical activity or sports. Physical activity also helps reduce risk of chronic disease and certain health conditions by increasing cardiovascular and muscular fitness and promoting bone health. Participating in regular physical activity is one of the most important steps that Americans of all ages can take to improve their health.

## Amounts of Activity Across the Lifespan

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines from the Department of Health and Human Services recommends the following for people in these age groups:

### Children and Adolescents (ages 6-17)

Young people should participate in moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity for periods that add up to 60 minutes or more in a day, taking care to get in at least three days of vigorous activity per week. Aerobic and age-appropriate muscle- and bone-strengthening activities should be part of this regimen.

### Adults (ages 18-64)

Adults must take care to avoid inactivity, set realistic goals for physical activity, and slowly increase to 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes (1 ¼ hours) of vigorous-intensity activity each week. An equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity activity may also be performed. Any activity should be done for at least 10 minutes at a time.

For even greater health benefits, adults should consider getting 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or more than 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) a week of vigorous-intensity activity. An equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity may be performed and any activity should be done for at least 10 minutes at a time.

In addition, adults should also perform moderate or high-intensity muscle-strengthening activities involving all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.

### Adults with Disabilities

Adults with disabilities should perform aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities per the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines. If you are unable to meet these guidelines, then engage in regular physical activity according to your abilities. It is important to avoid inactivity. Consult a physical therapist about the amount and type of physical activity in order to engage in physical activity safely and effectively.

### Mature Adults (age 65 or older)

Mature adults should also note the following:

- If you are unable to perform 150 min/week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity because of a chronic condition, be as physically active as your abilities and condition allow;
- If you are at risk for falls\*, perform exercises that maintain or improve balance;
- Determine the level of effort required for physical activity relative to your fitness level;
- Know if/how your condition affects your ability to safely perform physical activity;
- If you have difficulty being active, consult your health care provider about amounts and types of physical activity appropriate for you.

