

Choosing the Right Physical Therapist



Quick Tips on Finding a Physical Therapist That's Right for You!

In many places across the USA, you can see a physical therapist without a physician's referral. You have the right to choose any physical therapist who practices in your state. Some physicians have a financial interest in physical therapy practices so if they refer you to a PT in their office, you are not required to go there. To help you make an informed decision on which physical therapy clinic is right for you, we suggest asking questions about the quality of care you desire to receive.

Below are 4 simple recommendations to help you get started.

#1 Find someone that sees one person at a time.



Too often Physical Therapists work in busy clinics where they are double, triple, or even quadruple booked. Don't waste your time seeking treatment from someone that doesn't actually listen to your problems and treat you. If you find yourself in a clinic where all you get is a handout of exercises and a hot pack, find somewhere else to go. Furthermore, if continuity of care is important to you, ask if you will see the same person each visit or if you will be bounced around to other assistants or techs.

#2 Look for someone that says they perform some type of *manual therapy*.

Manual therapy is a broad term that describes a variety of hands-on techniques to influence your tissues. Manual therapy techniques are effective at decreasing pain, improving range of motion, and limiting inflammation.



Your provider may perform a number of manual therapy strategies including, but not limited to, dry needling, cupping, manipulations, scraping or Instrument-Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization (IASTM).

#3 See a Physical Therapist That Understands Your Needs.

For instance, if you're a CrossFit athlete, you don't want to hear a therapist tell you to stop doing CrossFit. That's absurd and they probably don't know anything about your sport. The same is true for athletes of all other sports. Finding a physical therapist that understands your limitations and what you desire to return to is vital. It builds trust and helps you get on the right track to recovery- mentally and physically. In addition, consider if you need to see a therapist with advanced training in one or more specialty areas. This could include, but not limited to, Geriatrics, Sports Medicine, or Women's Health.



#4 Know What the Letters Behind Their Name Means.

The “alphabet soup” is a list of letters behind someone’s name. It represents their degrees, credentials, and certifications. To most people this may be irrelevant, but it’s still good to ask what those letters actually mean. Here is a list of a few.

- DPT – A clinician who has obtained their Doctorate of Physical Therapy Degree and holds a state license.
- OCS – A clinician that passed an 8-hour test to become a Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Orthopedic Physical Therapy.
- CSCS – Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. This is a certification that applies scientific knowledge to training athletes.
- SCS – Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Sports Physical Therapy. Similar to the OCS, but focuses on direct athletic venue coverage.
- MDT – This individual is certified in the McKenzie Method of Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy. This method is a classification system and a treatment model for patients with spinal or extremity pain.
- FAAOMPT or COMT - These are manual therapy certifications that show the provider has passed testing for hands-on treatment. It takes a while to get these so most providers with these credentials are a good choice.

Thanks for reading!

We hope this little bit of information helps you make the best decision on where to receive your physical therapy treatment.

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