

What is Physical Therapy?

Physical therapy is a form of treatment that is used when individuals experience difficulty moving around and completing everyday tasks. Physical therapy can help people move better and make daily tasks and activities easier. For example, it can help with walking, going up stairs, or getting in and out of bed.

What Does a Physical Therapist Do?

- Examine the patient and discuss symptoms and daily activities.
- Develop and implement a treatment plan.
- Goals may include helping joints move better, increasing flexibility, strength, endurance, coordination, and/or balance.
- Use a variety of techniques such as stretching, core exercises, weightlifting, and more.

How does physical therapy help someone with autism?

Your child will be evaluated by a physical therapist to assess the areas of need identified.

This can include:

- **Gross motor skills:** Using large muscles for sitting, standing, walking, running, etc.
- **Balance/coordination skills:** Using the brain, bones, and muscles in a coordinated effort. For example, climbing stairs, jumping, etc.
- **Strengthening:** Building muscle for support and endurance. For example, walking for a distance without becoming tired.
- **Functional mobility/motor planning:** Moving through space, day to day, for independence and efficiency. For example, climb onto a swing and make it swing back and forth.

Following an evaluation and thorough history, a physical therapist can work with an individual to target areas in need of improvement. These often include:

- Improvement in participation in daily routines at home, school, and the community.
- Developing better motor coordination.
- Improving reciprocal play skills, such as throwing and catching a ball with another person.
- Developing motor imitation skills.
- Developing a more stable posture.



How Do I Find a Physical Therapist?

After I receive a prescription from my provider for Physical Therapy, I can:

- Consult my child's case manager or supports coordinator.
- Call a Special Needs Unit.
- Connect with other parents through a local support group.
- Use this resource on [How to Find a Therapist](#) for other ideas.

References

[Physical Therapy- Topic Overview](#)

[The Role of the Pediatric Physical Therapist for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)