



American Physical Therapy Association
The Science of Healing. The Art of Caring.

APTA Background Sheet 2002

The Physical Therapist

The physical therapist provides services aimed at preventing the onset and/or slowing the progression of conditions resulting from injury, disease, and other causes. The physical therapist provides these services to people of all ages who have functional conditions resulting from back and neck injuries, sprains/strains and fractures, arthritis, burns, amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, birth defects such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida, injuries related to work and sports, and others.

What Do Physical Therapists Earn?

More than 120,000 physical therapists are licensed in the U.S. today. The median salary for a physical therapist is \$52,000 depending on position, years of experience, degree of education, geographic location, and practice setting.

Where Do Physical Therapists Practice?

Although many physical therapists practice in hospitals, nearly 80 percent practice in:

- Outpatient clinics or offices
- Inpatient rehabilitation facilities
- Skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities
- Homes
- Education or research centers
- Schools
- Hospices
- Industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments
- Fitness centers and sports training facilities

What Are the Educational Requirements for Becoming a PT?

The minimum educational requirement is a post-baccalaureate degree from an accredited education program. The majority of programs offer a master's degree, but a growing number of programs offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Currently, approximately 200 colleges and universities nationwide offer professional education programs in physical therapy.

What Are the Licensure Requirements for Becoming a PT?

After graduation, candidates must pass a state-administered national exam. Other requirements for physical therapy practice vary from state to state according to physical therapy practice acts or state regulations governing physical therapy.

What Is the Employment Outlook for Physical Therapy?

With just a 1.1 percent unemployment rate, physical therapists are now experiencing the best employment conditions since enactment of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

For more information on a career in physical therapy, visit our Web site at www.apta.org or contact APTA Public Relations, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1488, phone: 703/706-3248, fax: 703/706-8578.