



Do you want to be a *Physical Therapist?*



GENERAL OVERVIEW

NOTE: The following information was obtained verbatim from the American Physical Therapy Associations website. Learn more at <https://www.apta.org/AboutPTs/>.

WHO ARE PHYSICAL THERAPISTS?

Physical therapists (PTs) are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility - in many cases without expensive surgery and often reducing the need for long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects. Physical therapists can teach patients how to prevent or manage their condition so that they will achieve long-term health benefits. PTs examine each individual and develop a plan, using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles. Physical therapists 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. State licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices.

WHAT DO PHYSICAL THERAPISTS EARN?

More than 204,000 physical therapists are licensed in the United States today. The median salary for a physical therapist is \$85,000. Salaries vary based on position, years of experience, degree of education, geographic location, and practice setting. (Source: APTA 2013 Median Income of Physical Therapists Summary Report.)

WHERE DO PHYSICAL THERAPISTS PRACTICE?

Although many physical therapists practice in hospitals, more than 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?

All physical therapists must receive a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapist program before taking the national licensure exam that allows them to practice. Physical therapists have the most specialized education to help people restore and improve motion.

Today's physical therapist is required to complete a graduate degree - either a masters or clinical doctorate - from an accredited education program. A growing majority of programs offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Currently, 199 colleges and universities nationwide support 212 accredited professional physical therapist education programs; 96% now offer the DPT and the remaining programs are planning to convert.

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?

There is a high demand for physical therapists in the workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of physical therapists is expected to grow by 36 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. While demand for physical therapists varies by geographical region and area of practice, the unemployment rates are low across the country. The need for physical therapists is expected to remain strong into the foreseeable future as the US population ages and the demand for physical therapy services grows.

THE ROLE OF A PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Physical therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages, from newborns to the very oldest, who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

PTs examine each individual and develop a plan using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

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The Physical Therapy Profession:

Physical therapy is a dynamic profession with an established theoretical and scientific base and widespread clinical applications in the restoration, maintenance, and promotion of optimal physical function. Physical therapists:

- Diagnose and manage movement dysfunction and enhance physical and functional abilities.
- Restore, maintain, and promote not only optimal physical function but optimal wellness and fitness and optimal quality of life as it relates to movement and health
- Prevent the onset, symptoms, and progression of impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities that may result
- from diseases, disorders, conditions, or injuries.

The terms "physical therapy" and "physiotherapy," and the terms "physical therapist" and "physiotherapist," are synonymous.

As essential participants in the health care delivery system, physical therapists assume leadership roles in rehabilitation; in prevention, health maintenance, and programs that promote health, wellness, and fitness; and in professional and community organizations. Physical therapists also play important roles both in developing standards for physical therapist practice and in developing health care policy to ensure availability, accessibility, and optimal delivery of health care services. Physical therapy is covered by federal, state, and private insurance plans. Physical therapists' services have a positive impact on health-related quality of life.

As clinicians, physical therapists engage in an examination process that includes:

- Taking the patient/client history
- Conducting a systems review
- Performing tests and measures to identify potential and existing problems.

To establish diagnoses, prognoses, and plans of care, physical therapists perform evaluations, synthesizing the examination data and determining whether the problems to be addressed are within the scope of physical therapist practice. Based on their judgments about diagnoses and prognoses and based on patient/client goals, physical therapists:

- Provide interventions (the interactions and procedures used in managing and instructing patients/clients), their judgments about diagnoses and prognoses and based on patient/client goals, physical therapists:
- Provide interventions (the interactions and procedures used in managing and instructing patients/clients),
- Conduct re-examinations,
- Modify interventions as necessary to achieve anticipated goals and expected outcomes, and
- Develop and implement discharge plans.

Physical therapy can be provided only by qualified physical therapists (PTs) or by physical therapist assistants (PTAs) working under the supervision of a physical therapist.

Physical Therapist (PT) Education

Physical therapist (PT) professional education refers to the didactic and clinical education that prepares graduates for entry into practice of physical therapy. Education for the advancement of practicing physical therapists is termed post-professional.

Mission of Physical Therapist Professional Education

The mission of PT professional education is to graduate knowledgeable, service-oriented, self-assured, adaptable, reflective practitioners who, by virtue of critical and integrative thinking, lifelong learning, and ethical values, render independent judgments concerning patient/client needs that are supported by evidence; promote the health of the patient or client; and enhance the professional, contextual, and collaborative foundations for practice. These practitioners contribute to society and the profession through practice, teaching, administration, and the discovery and application of new knowledge about physical therapy experiences of sufficient excellence and breadth to allow the acquisition and application of essential knowledge, skills, and behaviors as applied to the practice of physical therapy. Learning experiences are provided under the guidance and supervision of competent faculty, in both the classroom and the clinic.

Physical Therapist Degree

Professional (entry-level) physical therapist education programs in the United States only offer the **Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree** to all new students who enroll. The **Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) and Master of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) degrees** are no longer offered to any new students in the United States. To practice as a physical therapist in the US, you must earn a physical therapist degree from a CAPTE- accredited physical therapist education program and pass a state licensure exam.

Curriculum

The length of professional DPT programs is typically 3 years. Primary content areas in the curriculum may include, but are not limited to, biology/anatomy, cellular histology, physiology, exercise physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, neuroscience, pharmacology, pathology, behavioral sciences, communication, ethics/values, management sciences, finance, sociology, clinical reasoning, evidence-based practice, cardiovascular and pulmonary, endocrine and metabolic, and musculoskeletal. Eighty percent (80%) of the DPT curriculum comprises classroom (didactic) and lab study and the remaining 20 percent (20%) is dedicated to clinical education. PT students spend on average 27.5 weeks in their final clinical experience.

- **Bachelor's Degree Required?** Most physical therapist education programs require applicants to earn a bachelor's degree prior to admission into the professional DPT program. Other programs offer a 3+3 curricular format in which 3 years of specific pre-professional (undergraduate/pre-PT) courses must be taken before the student can advance into a 3-year professional DPT program.

- **Freshmen Entry** - A few programs recruit all or a portion of students directly from high school into a guaranteed admissions program. High school students accepted into these programs can automatically advance into the professional phase of the PT program pending the completion of specific undergraduate courses and any other stated contingencies (eg, minimum GPA).

Bachelor's degree requirements (key code A4) and freshmen entry (key code A2) programs are identified on the Accredited PT & PTA Programs Directory.

Choosing the Right Program

It is extremely important that you attend a DPT program accredited by CAPTE and will only be able to sit for the licensure exam if you have graduated from a CAPTE-accredited program. Without a license you will be unable to practice. Check APTA's accredited programs directory and the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS) websites for a list and descriptions of DPT education programs.

A visit to one or more programs is also a valuable means for selecting the programs that best meet your educational goals and personal needs. You should consider a variety of factors when researching DPT education programs:

- Program structure and curriculum
- Types of clinical education and training opportunities
- Faculty composition and cohesiveness (years working together)
- Student demographics
- Facilities (eg, classrooms and labs)
- Campus setting (eg, rural, urban, suburban)
- Geographic location and distance from home/family
- Size of the university
- Size of PT program's entering class
- Licensure pass rates
- Employment rates
- Degree awarded
- Length of program
- Admission requirements

Cost and financial aid opportunities:

- Extracurricular activities
- Cost and financial aid opportunities
- Extracurricular activities

In an effort to compare the above factors, you may wish to:

- Contact current students and recent graduates of the program
- Interview employers who hire graduates and ask about program strengths and weaknesses

Ranking

APTA does not rank DPT education programs. Programs are accredited by CAPTE, which assures quality in physical therapist education. Graduation from an accredited program is currently required for eligibility to sit for the licensure examination for physical therapists in those states in which licensure is required.

Tuition and Fees

The mean tuition rates per year for DPT programs in 2013 were as follows:

- **Public In-state:** \$14427 (range: \$3387 to \$45340)
- **Public Out-of-state:** \$29157 (range: \$8425 to \$65156)
- **Private:** \$31716 (range: \$19500 to \$94020)

Check the directory of accredited programs and contact the DPT education program directly about Scholarships, Awards, and Grants opportunities.

Furthering Your Education (After Graduation)

Clinical Residency and Clinical Fellowships

Licensed physical therapists may choose to pursue a residency or fellowship program to enhance their knowledge and practice.

- **Clinical Residency:** A clinical residency is a planned program of post-professional clinical and didactic education for physical therapists that is designed to significantly advance a physical therapist resident's preparation as a provider of patient care services in a defined area of clinical practice. It combines opportunities for ongoing clinical supervision and mentoring with a theoretical basis for advanced practice and scientific inquiry.
- **Clinical Fellowship:** A clinical fellowship is a planned program of post-professional clinical and didactic education for a physical therapist who demonstrates clinical expertise in an area of clinical practice related to the practice focus of the fellowship. (Fellows are frequently post-residency prepared or board-certified specialists.)

A fellowship program must possess a curriculum that:

- Is focused, with advanced clinical and didactic instruction within a subspecialty area of practice;
- Is intensive and includes extensive mentored clinical experience; and,
- Provides a sufficient and appropriate patient population to create an environment for advanced clinical skill building.

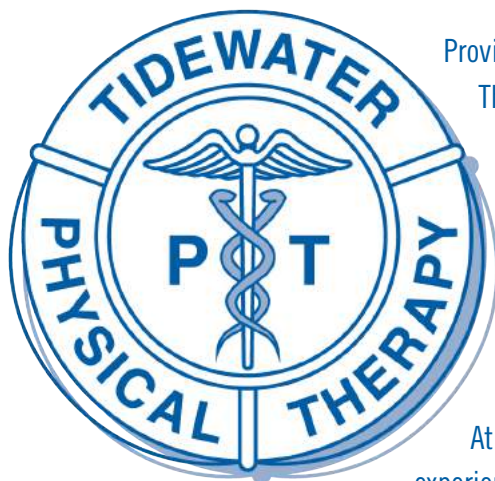
Specialty Certification

Physical therapists have the opportunity to become board-certified clinical specialists through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialities (ABPTS). Specialization is the process by which a physical therapist builds on a broad base of professional education and practice to develop a greater depth of knowledge and skills related to a particular area of practice. Specialty certification is voluntary. PTs are not required to be certified in order to practice in a specific area.

Physical therapists can become board-certified specialists in the following areas:

- Cardiovascular and Pulmonary
- Clinical Electrophysiology
- Geriatrics
- Neurology
- Orthopedics
- Pediatrics
- Sports Physical Therapy
- Women's Health

ABOUT TIDEWATER PHYSICAL THERAPY



Providing the best care possible for over 30 years, Tidewater Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Associates, P.A. was founded in 1984 in Easton, Maryland, under the guidance of Dr. W. James Downs, Jr., PT, DSc, ECS. Downs founded the firm in response to local physicians seeking progressive physical therapy services for patients on the Delmarva Peninsula. It is that grassroots approach that has been the cornerstone of Tidewater Physical Therapy's philosophy since day one.

At Tidewater Physical Therapy, we pride ourselves on the quality and experience of our therapists. Our expert staff is well known for effective outcomes, clinical quality, and exceptional customer service. Our physical therapists are fully licensed and are also proud members of the American Physical Therapy Association. Our staff is focused on improving our patients' health, well-being, and quality of life.

Since its foundation, Tidewater Physical Therapy has expanded to 16 locally-managed offices across Delmarva. The clinic areas in Maryland include: Cambridge, Centreville, Chester, Denton, Easton, Ocean Pines, Pocomoke, Salisbury and St. Michaels. The clinic areas in Delaware include: Dover, Harrington, Lewes North, Lewes West, Milton, Ocean View, and Seaford. All of our clinical directors and physical therapists are from the local communities they serve. Community is such an important pillar in our business that it recently inspired our new motto, "working with you, living by you, caring for you."

Our therapists have continued to increase their certifications and knowledge in many specialty areas to provide for their ever-growing patient population. Areas of specialty at Tidewater Physical Therapy include, Active Release Techniques (ART ®), Aquatic Therapy, Balance Therapy, Certified Exercise Experts for Again Adults (CEEAA), Electromyography and Nerve Conduction Study Testing (ECS), Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCE), Hand Therapy (CHT), Lymphedema Therapy (CLT), Manual Therapy, Orthopedic and Sports Therapy, Performance, Post Therapy and General Wellness Programming, Pre and Post-Operative and Joint Replacement Therapy, Pre-Employment Screenings, Stroke Rehabilitation, Titleist ® Performance Institute (TPI) Certified Golf Fitness Coaching, and Vestibular Therapy.

After over 30 years, Tidewater Physical Therapy is now the most widely recognized, highly accredited physical therapy firm on Delmarva, setting the standard for exceptional care in a comfortable, friendly, and community-oriented setting. Today, with 16 locally-owned clinics across the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Delaware, Tidewater Physical Therapy has become Delmarva's leading and most respected provider of physical therapy.