

BENEFITS OF
**CONSUMER
DIRECT ACCESS** TO
PHYSICAL THERAPIST
SERVICES

- Patient choice
- Eliminates unnecessary physician visits
- Reduces costs and patient frustrations caused by delays in initiating care
- Improves accessibility to rehabilitative services



California Physical Therapy Association

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What is a **PHYSICAL THERAPIST?**

BENEFITS OF
PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Increase and maintain muscle strength, balance and flexibility
- Restore normal movement for standing, walking, running
- Improve coordination
- Decrease pain
- Reduce swelling and inflammation of joints
- Promote health and wellness
- Return patient to prior level of physical function and mobility
- Promote wound healing



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PROFESSION	DESCRIPTION	EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS	LICENSURE / REQUIREMENTS
PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experts in human movement who examine, diagnose movement impairments and treat individuals with conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities Restore, maintain and promote overall fitness, health and wellness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-graduate physical therapy education Advanced residency specialty training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate from an accredited physical therapy program Master's or doctoral degree required for graduation after 2000 Pass national and state licensure exams Post-graduate specialist certification available through American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) Continuing education required by most states to maintain licensure
PHYSICIAN (MD/DO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnose and treat disease, illness and injury Perform physical exams, obtain medical histories and order, perform and interpret diagnostic tests MD – Doctor of Medicine or allopathic physicians DO – Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, special emphasis on the musculoskeletal system, preventive medicine and holistic patient care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-graduate medical education MDs – three plus additional years of post-graduate training for specialty DOs – two plus years of post-graduate training for specialty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate from an accredited medical school Pass state licensure examination Post-graduate specialist certification available through the American Board of Medical Specialists (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Continuing medical education required to maintain licensure
PODIATRIST (DPM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnose and treat disorders, diseases and injuries of the foot, ankle and lower leg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three to four years of undergraduate study Four years at a college of podiatric medicine Two to four years of residency training for specialty and surgery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate from an accredited podiatric medical school Pass state licensure examination Post-graduate specialist certification available through the American Board of Medical Specialists (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Continuing medical education required to maintain licensure
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (OT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide skilled treatment for people who suffer from mental, physical, developmental or emotional conditions to develop, recover or maintain daily living and work skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-graduate occupational therapy education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate from an accredited occupational therapy program Master's degree required for graduation after 2007 Pass a national certification/ licensure exam Continuing education required by most states to maintain licensure
CHIROPRACTOR (DC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnose and treat patients with health problems of the musculoskeletal system, perform spinal manipulation or adjustment based on the principle that spinal misalignment interferes with the nervous system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two to four years of undergraduate education Completion of a four-year chiropractic college program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a four-year program at an accredited chiropractic college Pass national and state exams All States, except New Jersey, require continuing education to maintain licensure
PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT (PA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries Provide diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive health care services as delegated by a physician Work under the supervision of a physician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-year, full-time PA educational program Most applicants to PA educational programs hold a bachelor's degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an accredited, formal education program Pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam Recertification exam or completion of an alternative program combining learning experiences and a take-home exam required every six years Continuing education required to maintain licensure
ATHLETIC TRAINER (ATC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialize in preventing, recognizing, managing and rehabilitating injuries that result from physical activity Work under the supervision of a physician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an accredited athletic training curriculum Licensure or regulation is not required in all states – unlicensed in California Pass national certification exam administered by the Board of Certification (BOC) Continuing education required by most states to maintain licensure
PERSONAL TRAINER (NO DESIGNATION)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design exercise routines and teach exercises to their clients Lead, instruct and motivate individuals or groups in exercise activities Help clients assess their level of physical fitness and set and reach fitness goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and training required depends on the specific type of fitness work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No national certification exists Fitness facilities may require formal fitness training as a requirement of employment
MASSAGE THERAPIST (CMT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massage therapy is used as a means of addressing painful ailments, relieving tired and overworked muscles, reducing stress and promoting general health through manipulation of the soft tissues of the body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training standards and requirements vary greatly by state concentrating on certain modalities of massage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training standards and requirements vary greatly by state and locality Can volunteer to take the National Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCETMB) Many states require therapists pass the NCETMB to practice massage therapy