

## What is Physiotherapy? And what does a physiotherapist do???

I am often asked this question in the clinic, and the answer is we treat everyone for just about everything!!

Physiotherapy is defined as 'a health profession which provides services to individuals in order to develop, maintain and restore maximum movement and functional ability throughout life, including all circumstances where movement and function are threatened by aging, injury, disease or environmental factors.'

The New Zealand Society of Physiotherapy has recently changed its statement to be 'Movement for Life'. Which defines what we want to achieve with every patient, no matter what their age or disability.

Physiotherapy is a four year degree which is completed at either Auckland University of Technology or Otago University. It is often confused with Physical Education and massage, but whilst Physiotherapy has many aspects which relate to these, the profession has a much broader range.

Physiotherapy has essentially three different speciality areas, these include;

Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy  
Neurological Physiotherapy  
Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapy.

Many of you will know about a musculoskeletal physiotherapist and may have had treatment from them. This area of physiotherapy includes the treatment of people in an outpatient setting for all types of injuries and pain. I am often asked if I 'do' backs. And the answer is 'Yes absolutely'. We are trained to treat all areas of the body including the neck, spine, arms and legs. Musculoskeletal physiotherapy also involves the treatment of people whilst in hospital with broken bones, fractures and both pre and post-surgery.

Neurological physiotherapy is a lesser known aspect of physiotherapy, unless you or a loved one have been unfortunate enough to require treatment, most people are unaware it even exists. This aspect of Physiotherapy involves working with people after they have had a neurological event. This may have been a stroke, head injury, MS, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease or brain injury. Patients are often seen whilst in hospital and in an outpatient setting.

Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapy is the treatment of people with either lung or heart problems. This is a range of conditions which includes; people on ventilators, asthmatics, hyperventilation syndrome, anxiety attacks, pulmonary rehabilitation,

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cardiac rehabilitation, collapsed lungs, Cystic fibrosis, emphysema, bronchiectasis and post-operative patients. People are usually seen in hospital and then referred for outpatient therapy.

This is by an example of the types of patients we treat, and by no means a finished list. All physiotherapists are fully trained in all aspects of physiotherapy, and then we decide which career path to take after graduation. The three aspects are not completely separate, but are integrated. As part of our outpatient clinic we often treat people with asthma, hyperventilation, Parkinson's and ankle sprains all in the same day.

The goal of physiotherapy is to improve your function and mobility to enable you to continue to complete the tasks and activities which you enjoy. Whether this is competing in a sports event, doing the gardening, looking after your grandchildren or children, or even just walking around the block and staying independent in your own home with cleaning and showering, we want to make this as easy and safe for you as possible.

We provide everyone with a full assessment, treatment plan and treatment to assist them with achieving their goals. Your physiotherapist will give you a full explanation of your problem in words which you understand and together with you, decide on a treatment pathway. Your physiotherapist is a trained professional with a medical degree so you can be sure the information you are getting is correct, and the exercises and treatment will be safe for you, no matter what your medical history.

Physiotherapists like people to self-manage their own conditions, therefore we give you all the information and exercises you need to do this. We do not encourage dependency on us, and we will never treat you for any longer than is necessary. Treatment can include exercises, massage, stretches, strength exercises, ultrasound and mobilisation / manipulation of joints.

If you have a condition you would like to discuss with a physiotherapist then please contact us and we will be able to advise you whether physiotherapy is right for you.

Physiotherapists are able to refer you on to a specialist if they feel you need further assessment. We can refer people for x-rays and ultrasounds without having to go through the doctor, and we are able to register your ACC claims without you having to see a doctor first. People are able to come straight to the physiotherapist, no GP referral is necessary.