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Prospective Students

Current Students

New Professionals

PTAs

Educators

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Careers &amp; Education

Practice &amp; Patient Care

Payment

Advocacy

News &amp; Publications

For the Public

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Find Jobs

Courses &amp; Conferences

About PT/PTA Careers

Career Management

Career Development

For Educators

[Home](#) > [Careers & Education](#) > [About PT/PTA Careers](#) > [Who Are Physical Therapists?](#)
[Text Size](#) [Favorite](#)

## 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.

[Learn more about the role of a physical therapist.](#)

## What Do Physical Therapists Earn?

More than 184,000 physical therapists are licensed in the US today. The median salary for a physical therapist is \$80,000 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, 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

[Learn more about physical therapist practice.](#)

## 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

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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.

[Learn more about physical therapist education.](#)

## 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?

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), employment of physical therapists is expected to grow by 30 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), with just a 0.2 percent unemployment rate, physical therapists are now experiencing the best employment conditions since enactment of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

## How Do I Become a PT?

Are you interested in becoming a PT? Learn how in our [Prospective Students](#) section!

## Additional Information

### Today's Physical Therapist

Provides an in-depth profile of the history, role, educational preparation, laws governing practice, standards of practice, evidence base of the profession, payment for physical therapy services, and workforce issues unique to the physical therapy profession.

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[Career Management](#)

[Career Development For Educators](#)

[Practice & Patient Care](#)

[Patient Care](#)

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[Licensure](#)

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