

Choose Physical Therapy For Safe Pain Management



Movement is crucial to a person's health, quality of life and independence. For some people, pain makes movement a challenge. Pain is one of the most common reasons people seek health care. A physical therapist (PT) can help people move better and safely and manage their pain.

Who are physical therapists?

PTs are movement experts who improve quality of life through prescribed exercise, hands-on care and patient education. PTs treat people of all ages and abilities and empower them to actively take part in their own care.

Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) work with patients under the direction of a PT and teach and demonstrate exercises that help improve mobility, strength and coordination.

To ensure the best possible care, PTs often work with other members of a patient's health care team. After performing an evaluation, PTs create personalized plans of care that can help you:

- Improve mobility and function
- Manage pain and chronic conditions
- Avoid surgery
- Reduce the use of opioids and other prescription drugs
- Recover from injury
- Prevent future injury and chronic disease

Here are three tips to manage pain:

Tip: Work with your PT to understand your pain. PTs play a valuable role in the patient education process, including setting realistic expectations for recovery with or without opioids. This allows you to take a proactive approach to pain management.

Tip: Keep moving. An active lifestyle that is appropriate for your condition can help manage symptoms and decrease or eliminate pain. The body was built to move, and doing so regularly can help improve quality of life. PTs prescribe exercise specific to your condition, needs and goals.

Tip: If you experience an injury or develop the onset of pain, seeing a PT early on can help address and manage your symptoms.

When and where do you see a physical therapist?

Pain management is just one reason to work with a PT. They can also help you prevent future injury or chronic conditions. You do not need a physician's referral to make an appointment with a PT for an evaluation.

PTs can specialize in a variety of areas, including geriatrics, neurology, oncology, orthopedics, pediatrics, sports and women's health. They provide treatments in:

- Hospitals, outpatient clinics or offices
- Inpatient rehabilitation facilities
- Skilled nursing, extended care or subacute facilities
- Schools, education or research centers
- Fitness centers and sports training facilities
- Hospice settings
- Your workplace
- Your home

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Physical Therapy: A Safe Alternative to Opioids for Pain Management



No one wants to live in pain. But no one should put their health at risk in an effort to be pain free.

Doctor-prescribed opioids are appropriate in some cases, but they just mask the pain—and opioid risks include depression, overdose, and addiction, plus withdrawal symptoms when stopping use. That's why the CDC recommends safer alternatives like physical therapy to manage pain.

Physical therapists treat pain through movement, hands-on care, and patient education—and by increasing physical activity you can also reduce your risk of other chronic diseases.

Why Physical Therapy for Pain Management?

Physical therapists treat pain through movement.	Opioids only mask the sensation of pain.
Physical therapy "side effects" include improved mobility, increased independence, decreased pain, and prevention of other health problems through movement and exercise.	Opioid side effects include depression, overdose, addiction, and withdrawal symptoms.
Physical therapy is effective for numerous conditions, and the CDC cited "high quality evidence" supporting exercise as part of physical therapist treatment for familiar conditions like low back pain, hip and knee osteoarthritis, and fibromyalgia.	Opioid effectiveness for long-term pain management is inconclusive in many cases.

Other Reasons to Choose Physical Therapy

Alternative to surgery: Physical therapy has been found to be as effective as surgery for conditions including meniscal tears and knee osteoarthritis, and rotator cuff tears.

Individualized treatment: Physical therapist treatment plans are tailored to each person's needs and goals.

Identification of potential risks: Physical therapists can identify additional health issues, beyond what the patient initially reports, thereby improving a person's overall health and quality of life.

Participate in your care: Being an active participant in your recovery process can have a positive effect on your success.

References

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