

Your Guide To

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PHYSICAL THERAPIST



**ATHLETES'
TRAINING CENTER**
SPORTS PERFORMANCE & PHYSICAL THERAPY

Working through physical therapy to get back to 100 percent after an injury is an investment of time and health care dollars. This is especially true following surgery where physical therapy becomes a long-term commitment and you see your physical therapist several times a week for a longer duration of time.

For sure you want to work with someone who you feel comfortable with and who understands your physical goals and philosophies, but you also want that person to be skilled and at the forefront of their field. This choice becomes even more complicated if you've never had physical therapy before because you don't know what to expect and what the differences might be between providers or clinics.

With all of this in mind, we have created this guide to help you find the right match for your personal physical therapy journey. We hope that by using these checklists to do your research, you'll be able to find a physical therapist who works with you to get the results you desire, pushes you to achieve goals, and gets you back to your favorite activities pain-free.

First, let's talk about some common myths.



myth:

All physical therapy is the same, regardless of where you choose to go.

reality:

The experience can be very different from clinic to clinic and physical therapist to physical therapist.

It is true all physical therapists graduate with the same basic set of skills and knowledge. It is also true that from a general science stand point, therapy needs to follow a general recipe. From there things begin to differ. Therapists form their practice philosophies and learn new techniques as they stay up to date with continuing education. New research spurs along changes in treatment choices or equipment used. A host of contributing factors make each physical therapist and each practice setting unique.



myth:

When you need physical therapy after an injury or surgery, you have to go to the practice or physical therapist recommended by your physician.

reality:

You have a choice when it comes to finding the right physical therapist for your particular needs.

Many people mistakenly believe they do not have a choice when pursuing physical therapy. The truth is you can choose where to go and find the right fit for your needs and goals. This is especially true if you are simply handed a list of physical therapy providers and told you can choose anyone on that list. The important consideration for your physician will be your progress and outcomes.



STEP 1

Assess Your Needs

Many people often skip this part of finding the right physical therapist, but it's probably the most important step. Get out a piece of paper, or take notes right in this guide, and sit down to spend a few moments answering the following questions for yourself. Make sure to be honest and realistic.

1. What is the injury, condition or surgery I am addressing?

2. What are my goals?

3. What is my commitment level?



STEP 2

Ask for Recommendations

Other people are one of your best resources for learning more about a specific physical therapist. Find a few people who have used physical therapy and take a few moments to ask them the following questions. You'll notice there are some questions about more than just how their experience went with the physical therapist. It's important you find a place that not only supports that practitioner, but provides you resources for all aspects of your care.

1. Did you see the same physical therapist each time?
2. Did your physical therapist listen to your goals?
3. Were you able to reach your goals?
4. Did you feel your therapist provided the level of motivation you desired?
5. If needed, was the therapist able to make adjustments to the initial plans to best fit your needs?
6. Did you spend the majority of time actively working to get better?
7. Were you happy with the staff?
8. Did they have the tools, equipment, and space to fully address returning you to your desired activities?



STEP 3

Do Your Research

This step is made up of three smaller steps. Completing each of them will ensure you gather enough research to make the right selection.

STEP 3A

Perform Online Research

Once you have a list of referrals, perform some due diligence by looking up their websites. Get a feel for the philosophies and values as they relate to your personal philosophies and values. Evaluate the quality of the team, not just the individual physical therapist. Read through their blog. Begin to assess whether the physical therapist or clinic can meet the needs and goals you outlined in step 1. Be sure to take notes so you can compare the information you are gathering once you finish this step.



Avoid the Most Common Pitfall When Choosing a Physical Therapist

Many people approach choosing a physical therapist from the mindset of convenience rather than focused on their well being. They take into consideration whether the therapist is located close to home or work so going to therapy will be convenient. That works out okay if a talented physical therapist is on your neighborhood corner. However, it can backfire if you end up choosing a location for convenience and not based on your needs and goals.

HINT: Look back to Step 1 and review your answer to how committed you are to the process of getting better. If your commitment level is low, then choosing for convenience may work. If you indicated your commitment level was matched to reaching specific goals, you need to avoid choosing for convenience.

Consider these two scenarios:

SCENARIO 1

Bob chooses a physical therapist five minutes from his house. He ends up getting shuffled from therapist to therapist and his plan seems to be more protocol driven. He begins to see his progress stall. Ultimately he needs 20 visits to reach his goals and has spent far more health care dollars than he originally planned.

SCENARIO 2

Bob chooses a physical therapist and drives 15 minutes for his appointments. His therapist is attentive to his needs and develops a plan focused on his goals. Ultimately he needs 10 visits to reach his goals. He returned to the activity he loves doing and happily paid his bill, which was what he expected.



STEP 3B

Read Reviews and Evaluate Outcomes

Just like you would read reviews before purchasing a product or service, you should do the same to learn more about a practice or therapist. The easiest place to find reviews is to start with Google and look up the business. Reviews will not only give you a snapshot of the person's experience, but it will often provide insight into their outcomes.



STEP 3C

Visit the Physical Therapist

Once you have narrowed down your list of candidates, plan a visit to their clinic. Ask for a tour and to briefly meet the therapist or someone familiar with the therapist's approach to care. Even if you can't meet personally with your therapist, you can gain an understanding of the clinic in general and if it will match your needs. You can learn a lot about a clinic by how the front desk team interacts with patients coming in and out of the practice.

You can ask them:

1. Why did you become a physical therapist?
2. What do you enjoy most about the practice?
3. What is your process for developing a plan of care?
4. What is the "why" behind your plan of care?
5. How does this clinic support your growth as a clinician?

Remember, they will be in patient care so be mindful of the time you are keeping them away from their patient.



Pulling it All Together

You've done a lot of work, but it will be worth it! Now it's time to pull all the steps together. Use the following checklist and any notes you took along the way to sort through your research. Remember, you will be working closely with this person and if you are hesitant in whether they are a good match for you, trust your gut and take them off your list right now.

Your Physical Therapist Research Checklist

- Did you receive positive feedback from former patients?
- Did they have a good online presence and reviews?
- Are their qualifications in line with what you desire?
- Do you feel comfortable talking and working with this physical therapist?
- Did you feel they would be attentive to your needs?
- Will the environment provide the tools, space and equipment to reach your goals?
- Was the staff practice friendly and welcoming during your initial visit?



Learn More

If you've recently suffered from an injury or had surgery that is keeping you from participating in sports or performing your daily activities and are looking for a physical therapist, we hope you will include Athlete's Training Center in your list of options. We provide a unique, research-based approach to physical therapy uses traditional processes to get you or your child back to daily activities and back into sports. Then we take it to the next level, teaching you how to jump and land correctly, or how to perform the movements in the sport you love in a way that decrease chances of getting injured again.

**Call today to make an appointment
to meet with our staff and tour our facilities.**

We offer convenient hours to fit your schedule, from 7 a.m.-6 p.m.
Monday through Friday and Saturdays by appointment.



Travis Manners
President, Athletes' Training Center Sports Performance
and Physical Therapy

* The information contained in this guide are for educational purposes only and should not be substituted for instruction by a qualified physical therapist. We cannot accurately diagnose a person's symptoms without a complete physical and medical examination.





ATHLETES' TRAINING CENTER

SPORTS PERFORMANCE & PHYSICAL THERAPY

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