

Physical Therapist Assistant

A physical therapist assistant helps people recover from injuries, surgeries, and illnesses by guiding them through exercises and treatments planned by a physical therapist. They work in places like hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, and outpatient clinics. Physical therapist assistants encourage patients, track their progress, and help them improve their strength, movement, and independence so they can return to the activities they enjoy.

► School to Career Pathway

- Earn an associate of applied science degree (2 years).
- Pass the National Physical Therapy Exam.

► Durable Skills

As a physical therapist assistant, you need:

- Good communication skills to talk with patients and write treatment plans.
- Strong active listening skills to pay attention to what other people are saying, understand the points being made, ask questions as appropriate, and not interrupt at inappropriate times.
- Problem-solving skills to identify the difficulty a patient is having and devise a treatment plan to help.
- Empathy and interpersonal skills to actively look for ways to help people.
- Organizational ability to manage your own time and the time of your patients and team.

► Paycheck Peek

\$31.50 hourly, \$65,510 annual

*Note that annual wages vary by location (state, city, or work setting)



Core Duties

Lead Patients Through Exercises:

Help patients complete exercises and stretches designed by the physical therapist to improve strength, flexibility, balance, and movement.

Provide Treatment and Therapy:

Use techniques such as massage, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, or heat and ice treatments to help reduce pain and support recovery.

Monitor Patient Progress: Observe how patients are improving, track their progress, and report changes or concerns to the physical therapist.

Teach Safe Movement Techniques:

Show patients how to safely walk, use crutches or walkers, climb stairs, and perform everyday activities without causing further injury.

Encourage and Support Patients:

Motivate patients throughout their recovery, answer questions, and help them stay positive as they work toward their goals.



CAREER PROFILE | HEALTH & LIFE SCIENCES

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Could This Be Your Thing?

- Do you like helping friends, classmates, or family members when they need support?
- Are you curious about science topics, like how your body moves, grows, or heals?
- Can you explain things clearly to others, such as giving directions during a group project or helping someone understand homework?
- Do you stick with things even when they're challenging, like practicing a skill or finishing a tough assignment?
- Do you enjoy being active, such as playing sports, exercising, or moving around during the day?
- Do you like cheering others on and helping your friends or teammates do their best?

Explore Similar Career Pathways

- occupational therapist
- physical therapist aide
- athletic trainer

Dig Deeper Here

Find out more about all careers at: [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Find out more about STEM careers at: [Careers with STEM: Health](#)

Find out more about the careers above:

- [O*NET Online: Physical Therapist](#)
- [O*NET Online: Occupational Therapist](#)
- [O*NET Online: Physical Therapist Aide](#)
- [O*NET Online: Athletic Trainer](#)