Physical Therapy (D.P.T.)

What does a Physical Therapist do?

- PT’s help patients restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain, and prevent physical disabilities.
- Work closely with patients to restore, maintain, and promote fitness and health.
- Assist patients who have been in accidents as well as those with disabling conditions such as stroke, arthritis, and head injuries.
- PT’s work with a patient’s medical history and measure strength, range of motion, balance, coordination, muscle performance, and motor function.
- Help determine if the person can function independently.
- Develop a treatment plan that will help the patient improve function, prevent further injury, and reach their personal goals. As treatment progresses, the PT conducts periodic examinations, tracks the patient’s progress, keeps careful case notes, and modifies the treatment as needed.
- PT’s work in a variety of settings including schools, hospitals, clinics, and private offices. Some also treat patients on-site in their homes and nursing home rooms.
- They often consult with physicians, dentists, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists and audiologists.
- Some PT’s treat a wide range of ailments while others specialize in areas such as pediatrics, geriatrics, sports medicine, neurology, and cardiopulmonary physical therapy.
- Employers also seek PT’s to evaluate worksites, develop exercise programs, and teach safe work habits.
- Physical therapy can be a physically demanding job that requires stooping, kneeling, lifting, and standing for long periods.
- Physical therapists need strong interpersonal skills to work with the variety of patients they see.

How do I become a Physical Therapist?

- The physical therapy degree has changed from a master’s level degree to a doctorate of physical therapy (DPT). You should look for an accredited program that offers a DPT.
- A bachelor’s degree, clinical background, certain prerequisite courses, and often an aptitude test (GRE) are required.
- It is especially important that you shadow a physical therapist in preparation for this career. One reason for this is to be sure that you are ready for the physical demands of the position.
- All physical therapists must pass a licensure exam before they can practice.

What prerequisite courses do I need?

- Although PT programs do not have a standard set of requirements, many similarities in their requirements do exist, see listing below.
- Generally a grade of C or higher is required for all pre-req courses.
- Initial courses are similar to other professional health care fields such as MD and OT programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Purdue Equivalent (specific course may vary depending on your undergraduate major)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>BIOL 20300 &amp; 20400 but some schools also require BIOL 11000/11100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>CHM 11500 &amp; 11600 (CHM 11100 &amp; 11200 cannot replace CHM 11500)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>PHYS 22000 &amp; 22100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>STAT 30100 OR 50300, some schools will take PSY 20100 OR SOC 38200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psych/Life Span</td>
<td>PSY 12000 &amp; HDFS 21000 OR PSY 12000 &amp; PSY 23500 &amp; PSY 36700</td>
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Other required/recommended courses may include: English composition, exercise science, college algebra, & medical terminology.

Some programs require a specific number of hours in Social Science & Humanities coursework.
What is the job outlook?

- The job outlook for physical therapists is excellent. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a faster than average increase in demand for physical therapists as the age of our population increases.
- Many members of the Armed Services will also need assistance as they recover from injuries sustained during their service in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- To contain costs, PT’s are increasingly supervising physical therapy assistants and aides.
- In 2010, the median annual earnings of physical therapists was $76,310 (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Where can I get more information?

- American Physical Therapy Association
  http://www.apta.org
- PTCAS (application system)
  http://www.ptcas.org
- Programs in Indiana
  University of Indianapolis
  http://pt.uindy.edu/dpt/
  IUPUI
  http://shrs.iupui.edu/physical_therapy
  University of Evansville
  http://www.evansville.edu/majors/physicaltherapy/
  Trine University
  http://www.trine.edu/academics/master_programs/doctor_of_physical_therapy/

For more information about Physical Therapy programs or your interests in the health professions, contact the Center for Pre-Professional Advising at 765-496-2690 or preprofessional@purdue.edu OR Rosemary Ricci in the General Health Sciences Advising Office at rricci@purdue.edu.

Information for this career guide came from the above websites, the Bureau of Labor Statistics
http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos080.htm and Explore Health Careers,
http://www.explorehealthcareers.org