

The 36 Most Commonly Asked Questions About How Physical Therapy Can Help Your Problem

...whether it is new or old
OR just do not know
where to turn for help

By Andrew Zang DPT, OCS,
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About the Author

Dr. Andrew Zang has treated 1000s of patients with various complaints of stiffness, pain and lost function since 2008. Daily, Andrew addresses the needs of those suffering or skeptical of who can help them, many of who have dealt with it for months or years because they simply did not know what to do, who to turn to, or felt put-off by the medical field in general.

Andrew has regularly contributed as a writer for local newspapers on various topics of interest in health and rehabilitation. He also is engaged in teaching physical therapists on both the professional and post-professional levels. In 2016, Andrew achieved fellowship status with the American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists, something only 2% of physical therapists achieve in their career. Andrew began his own private practice, Zang Physical Therapy, in 2016 to be able to deliver unmatched personalized attention to all his patients.

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About this Report

This Free report is for those who are serious about their health and general well-being. It is for those that are concerned THEIR issue is now impacting their ability to participate in activities they love. For those who are skeptical about what the benefits of physical therapy might be for them. And for those who want to be able to maintain their function and independence for years to come, not limited by the effects of aging.

My goal is to hopefully dispel misbeliefs one may have regarding what exactly a physical therapist does and to help you make an informed decision regarding your health. Physical Therapists are much more skilled in treating problems than most people realize. In this special report, I will answer the most often asked questions to me over my years as a physical therapist. These questions have been asked by both prospective and actual patients of mine. Many of these questions relate to just what can a physical therapist do to help MY PROBLEM? What follows will be a straight-forward presentation providing the necessary answers to help you or others like you get the information they need to make an informed decision regarding their healthcare, such that you are able to live life to its fullest.

What I want you to understand is that not all Physical Therapists are the same. Each one has a skill set, and that may not be exactly what is best for your particular issue. I will not claim to know what others can or cannot do, BUT ask yourself this question....Do I want treated by a generalist PT or a specialist?

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Q #1 Can Physical Therapy help my problem?

Can I answer a Question with a Question...Are you seriously ready to live with less pain, take less medication and stay away from doctor's offices? Are you ready to put in the work necessary to regain your function to enjoy life again?

If your answers were YES, then YES physical therapy can help very likely help your problem.

Q #2 What exactly does a physical therapist do?

We are trained to ask questions and examine people suffering from pain/stiffness/lack of mobility/etc to discover the root cause of their problem. We then create an action plan in conjunction with the patient and to meet their specific goals such as walking with friends, playing with grandkids, ability to climb stairs again without pain or your activity limitation.

Q #3 How long does it take to get an appointment?

Generally speaking the goal is to get you seen within 24-48 hours. This is partially dependent on your availability as well. The more flexible you are for that 1st appointment the faster you can get moving again.

Q #4 What can I expect at my 1st appointment?

You will spend 1 hour with a highly trained professional who will learn all about you and how your problem is impacting the life you wish to live. You will have a thorough evaluation looking at your movement, flexibility, and strength. You will walk away knowing what IT is and a plan to overcome IT to regain or maintain the active life you desire.

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Q #5 Do I need a referral for Physical Therapy?

In Pennsylvania, the answer is NO for most major insurance companies. The exceptions to this rule are Medicare and Tricare at the moment, sorry Federal Regulations. You can be evaluated and treated for a period of 30 days without a referral from a doctor. Chances are you may be feeling better before that 30 days and would never have to visit your doctor. Should more time be necessary, we can request the script or you can ask your doctor for one.

Q #6 What should I wear to my session?

Generally speaking, loose fitting clothing is preferred. This will allow observation of the body region that is hurting you. This will help me to be able to fully assess and understand your problem and how to help you. Also, you want to be comfortable.

Q #7 What if my pain has been present for months or years?

Very common question asked. What are you waiting for...A special invitation to start feeling better? Yes, even if you have dealt with pain or lost mobility/motion/strength/etc. chances are you can feel better. All you have to do is make the commitment to feel better. If you are not willing to work some, then do not expect change

Q #8 How many sessions will I need?

The answer to his question is hard to say in this form. Every person and case is different. This can and will be discussed during your 1st visit. Your input to the decision-making is important as well.

Q #9 How long until I start to notice a difference?

The goal...to be able to feel a difference within 2-3 weeks. This does not mean healed and 100%. This means you notice some improvement in the aspect of your life that you reported you were not satisfied with during that initial visit.

*** To achieve these results, patient compliance is a must (i.e. DO YOUR HOMEWORK) If you are not willing to do your homework and be an active participant in the process, I am not the PT for you.

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Q #10 How do you decide when I have reached maximum gain?

Depends on the person and their goals. My goal is to assist that patient to achieve satisfactory results such that they tell me....I feel good, am back to my activities, and do not need you right now (but want the option to come back if necessary)....PATIENT EMPOWERMENT

Q #11 What if I feel better before that 1st visit or at any point during my plan of care?

Great...Mission Accomplished. Happy Patient. Call to cancel and review your maintenance plan to prevent IT from coming back.

Q #12 How long should I wait with an injury before coming to see a PT?

Don't! Get your issue addressed quickly. Get back to living the life you want NOW. More importantly, you will be able to get advice on the best path to return to being active again. There is so much mis-information out there on the Internet about your injury that may leave you confused or unsure what to do. Getting accurate information from a qualified health professional can help you recover faster AND...avoid common errors many individuals make that results in the pain lasting longer.

Q #13 What happens if I choose not to immediately address my problem?

The longer you wait, typically the longer it takes to recover. Changes to muscles, tendons and ligaments happen very quickly after injury. Muscle atrophy can begin to occur only 48 hours after injury if you are not using a particular set of muscles due to pain.

After 1 week in a cast after ankle surgery, my calf shrunk to half the size it normally was. It took 6 months to regain size again.

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Q #14 What about other professions claiming to help my same problem?

Great question. There are other professions such as chiropractors, massage therapists, acupuncturists, etc that are able to help people with problems probably similar to yours. Yes, we do use some of the same treatment methods but the intent of our treatment plans tend to be different. Those that claim exclusivity to a hands on technique are likely insecure in their craft and are trying to discredit other professionals unnecessarily. Physical Therapists are educated in massage, manual mobilization of joints and the spine and even dry needling, a form of acupuncture (in some states). We all grew out of the doctor of osteopathy profession nearly a hundred years ago now.

So what do I offer as a PT.....A is a solution to YOUR problem. The goal is to get you back to what you love and are not able to do. My goal is to get you to fire me and not need to come back for the SAME problem for months/years on end selling you on this must continue to be done or else bad things will happen to (pick the body part).

Q #15 Can you treat me if I do not have imaging?

Absolutely. I do not treat images, I treat people with problems. I will listen to your story. Thoroughly examine you, and if anything does not seem within the scope of what I think I can treat, I will refer you out to the appropriate medical professional to help you including imaging if necessary.

Q #16 I am not sure Physical Therapy can help my problem?

Physical Therapists treat any muscle, joint, tendon, or ligament problem ranging from head to toe and everything in between. We help people return to the activities that they love including but not limited to: golfing, walking, climbing steps, lifting groceries/laundry without pain and so much more. Some of the most common problems include: neck or back pain, hip/knee/shoulder pain, plantar fasciitis, and ankle sprains

If you are having issues enjoying life the way you wish to, then chances are PT can help you return to what you love.

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Q #17 I still have more questions I need answered first before I commit to PT?

That is completely understandable. I am here anytime day or night to answer your questions to help you make the best decision possible regarding your health. Simply call 717-440-6197 or email Andrew@ZangPT.com to get your questions answered. Or simply fill out my inquiry form [HERE](#).

Q #18 A doctor told me I need surgery and I am not sure if there is another way?

Research has shown that many conditions that doctors are quick to do surgery on can do just as well if not better with physical therapy if done properly and the person is committed to the process. If you truly want to avoid surgery for issues such as meniscal tears of the knee, arthritis of the knee or hip, labral tears of the shoulder, back or neck pain then you came to the right place.

Numerous patients have been successful avoiding the operating table by committing to physical therapy. What do you have to lose by trying?

Q #19 But my issue is not always present. I may hurt bad one day but not another. Can that be helped? What if I am not hurting bad the day of that initial appointment?

Again, **ABSOLUTELY**. There is a reason that you are hurting and cannot enjoy all the activities you wish to. By talking with you and examining you, I can discover the reason for that and then assist you to overcome that problem....so that you can be more active with less pain again....enjoying life. Continuing to avoid treatment is the only sure way to continue to deal with the problem for months or years to come.

Q #20 What if I am not really in pain but can't do the things I enjoy in life due to stiffness, tightness or weakness?

You are still a **PERFECT** candidate for physical therapy. In fact, this is the **PERFECT** time to seek help....before IT truly becomes a painful problem. No need to wait for a big problem to surface that really hampers your active life. The **BEST** time to address anything is before it ever happens to you.

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At this point.....You are the type of person who may need just a few sessions to learn how to do everything on your own. BUT if you wait for that bigger problem....more visits will likely be necessary to get you back on track. You would be the person who truly values your health and wellness and wants to do anything/everything you can to maintain this.

Q #21 What Guarantee do I have that PT will work for me?

Honestly, none. The majority of people do in fact get better with QUALITY PT. But what I can GUARANTEE is if you do nothing, it may very well get worse. Maybe not this week or next month, but long term if you do not address the root cause of the problem. What would your life be like if you did nothing and it got WORSE????

Q #22 How do I know who a GOOD PT is?

A little tricky to answer and certainly biased here...BUT you will want to look for one that will not dance around the question. One who will look you in the eye and provide straight answers.

You also want to look at their credentials. We all have a basic PT degree yes, but the similarities end right there. Search for the one who is more specialized and has done advanced training in helping people just like you. The highest level of specialist training in the physical therapy profession is FAAOMPT...this is just like a doctor's fellowship level training in their given specialty.

If you just call any clinic, you may very well get stuck with the newest PT straight out of school. Do your homework first...Don't you deserve the most qualified therapist to get you back doing what you love?

Q #23 How many times per week will I need to come for therapy?

Truly depends on your condition, BUT in my model of care with EXCLUSIVE 1 on 1 care (no other patient will be present during your session), most people only need to be seen 1-2x/wk vs the traditional model of 3x/wk. Why? Because you will get more uninterrupted 1 on 1 time with me. This means I can better understand your problem and make changes quickly to help you achieve your desired goals faster. That will not be so with other therapy providers.

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Q #24 I have been told I have arthritis all over my body, can PT help that?

Once again, ABSOLUTELY. Arthritis is really just a normal part of age but sometimes happens sooner in some than others. And/or is a bit more severe in some. These folks tend to complain about tightness and stiffness early in the day. Creaking and cracking noises. Again, all relatively “normal”. That said, the best time to address these issues is early. Do not wait until they are so severe that you can hardly move. It becomes much more difficult to treat those folks vs early on (maybe even in your 40’s) to PREVENT future issues that could slow you down.

If you are over 40 years old, chances are you have some amount of arthritis (not to worry...it is normal). Don’t you wish to continue to be active for years to come without restrictions or pain? If so, then learn how to prevent these future mobility issues (you and others see every time you go out to eat or to the mall).

Q #25 I am starting to notice a bit more difficulty participating in some of my favorite activities and I want to continue doing them...how do I fix that?

Great question and the #1 reason I love my job. I help people maintain their ability to be active and enjoy the things they love....hiking, traveling, golf, running, you name it. The sooner you admit the problem and seek help for it, the faster you can get back to doing what you love with less limitation.

Q #26 I have heard Physical Therapy is painful...Is that true?

That is absolutely 100% not the goal at all. If the PT is listening carefully to your story (and you honestly answer all my questions), then you should not experience too much in the way of pain post session. There may be some post session soreness that is common and generally will go away within hours. If it lasts more than 1 day, then we were too aggressive with the session. That being said, if you are seeing me following a major surgery, there may be some associated pain which is why I think PT has the reputation for being called “Pain and Torture” (exact words from my father who thinks he is funny).

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Q #27 Are there things I can be doing at home to help speed things along?

I love when patients ask this. That means they are truly serious about getting better and being proactive in their care. YES, 100x over. Every patient of mine will walk away with 1-3 exercises that complement the therapy session to help move them closer to their desired goal of living a more active life with less pain. The best part is, most will involve nothing beyond what you already have in your home and most are portable if you travel frequently.

Q #28 Why was PT not recommended to before by my doctor?

Another great question here.

Just like the average person, most doctors really don't know all the PT can help

They are so busy that they just do not think to advise it

Patients are often unresponsive to doctors suggestions now that they no longer bother dispensing advice

They just do not know what to look or listen for. This is not really a knock on them, it is just their training does not involve physical medicine. Every healthcare provider has their niche and the great ones know who to refer to and where.

Q #29 How long will a session be?

Anywhere from 30-60 minutes based on your needs and can be discussed and planned out during the initial visit.

Q #30 Isn't PT just for old people or after surgery?

No!!! It is for anyone with ANY problem of stiffness, strength, mobility, and function impacting your daily life. If you are in pain or unable to do what you love, then PT is for YOU.

Q #31 Isn't PT just for young athletes?

Again NO!!!!!! See Q #30

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Q #32 I am in Soooooo much pain, I am not sure PT can help?

What are you waiting for? A special invitation. Physical therapists help people in pain every single day. Chances are if you come for a session that day you are in pain, you will walk away with less pain AND more confidence that you know what is going on and how it WILL get better. Don't wait for pain to be less. By then several days, weeks or months may have passed with you missing out on what you enjoy in life. Also, the longer you wait, that area of pain can begin to spread (deep pain science talk we can have if you like).

Q #33 Are you telling me my pain is all in my head?

In truth, pain is a construct of the brain, so at a baseline level yes. That said, the pain you feel is real to you and thus I will work with you to teach you to overcome it. The whole pain-brain concept is truly fascinating and pain education can be hugely helpful for those who have suffered with pain for years.

For more information on this presented in a fun way by a smart guy with a cool accent....watch here.

Q #34 Why should I see a PT and not a chiropractor or someone else?

Because you want to know what IT is, learn how to beat IT, and you do not want to be told you must continue to come back every week, month, every other month for the rest of your life to “control” it. With PT, I will teach you the tools necessary to manage 95% of the time. The other 5% if it gets bad enough, I will be there to get you back on track quickly and back to independence.

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Q #35 Is PT expensive?

That is a matter of perspective. Everything in healthcare is becoming more expensive. It is a pay now or pay later system (whether you or I like it or not).

That said, what is important to you???....seeking the cheapest option but involves more of your time away from family or work, living with pain longer, seeing the newest PT graduate and spending half your session with support providers. OR the BEST option providing you with 1 on 1 care with a PT only that you see less frequently and get you back to what you love in fewer visits.

Q # 36 I hear everything you are saying, but I am still unsure?

Come to one of my FREE Discovery sessions. Here you will get to spend about 20 -30 minutes getting a Taste of what PT really is about. You will walk away with a probable diagnosis and possibly even tips to begin to feel better that day.

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Conclusion

There you have it. I just answered the 36 most commonly asked questions to me by people just like you. Those who were unsure, nervous, or skeptical about what a physical therapist could do for them. The thing that held all of them back was not having enough information to confidently make the RIGHT decision to get help for their problem.

If you have read this far, then I know you are likely someone who is probably not happy living in pain or unable to be active and do the things you love. My hope is that I started to give you some information that you too will want to make the next decision to get help and start feeling better.

I am sure you may still have more specific questions and that is great.

You can contact me anytime:

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Disclaimer

While the information presented here is put forth in an effort to assist you in feeling better relative to your problem at hand, no guarantees can be made as to your results while taking these suggestions.

Every patient's issue is different and thus the program designed specifically for you may or may not include some of the items mentioned above. The only way to get more specific advice and guidance is to undergo a formal evaluation whereby a more specific diagnosis and prognosis can be provided.

If you do have specific health concerns, please let your physician or physical therapist know in order to enable the best treatment decision possible for you.

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