

# Practitioner Choices for Movement and Function

It can be difficult to know what to do when you have a nagging pain or are unable to move in a way you used to be able to. Are you just getting old? If you ignore it, will it go away? Should you take your friend's advice about who to see? Listen to the ads you see on television?

We hope this chart will help you decide who to choose for your care. In Washington, and in many other states, it's legal to see many of these practitioners without a referral from your primary care physician, although your insurance company may have additional requirements. All of the licensed practitioners are trained to know when your health condition exceeds the scope of their training — so you don't have to worry about whether the practitioner is qualified to treat you.

Also, two pieces of advice:

- We recommend that you use criteria other than cost to make your choice — but instead choose the practitioner who will best fit your health care need.
- An important factor that has a huge impact on length of treatment period is how quickly you seek medical attention.
- Keep your primary care physician informed about all of your health-related activities.

## Health Professions

Practitioner	Description	Educational Requirements	Licensure and Other Requirements (in Washington state)
Physical Therapist (PT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts in Human movement who examine patients with conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities, diagnose movement problems and devise and carry out a plan of care that is specific to that patient's needs</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and promote overall fitness, health and wellness</li> <li>• Coordinate care within the traditional medical system</li> <li>• Practice in all healthcare settings: private clinic, hospital nursing home, home health, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College degree: BA or BS</li> <li>• Graduate school: Three-year physical therapy program</li> <li>• Advanced residency and fellowship programs in specialty areas available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate from an accredited physical therapy program</li> <li>• Master's or doctoral degree required for graduation after 2000</li> <li>• Pass national licensure exams</li> <li>• Licensure required in Washington state</li> <li>• Although not required, post-graduate specialist certification — much like physician specialization — available through American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) in Cardiopulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiology, Geriatric, Neurological, Orthopedic, Pediatric, Sports and Women's Health</li> <li>• Continuing education required to maintain license</li> <li>• Physician referral not required by law</li> </ul>
Occupational Therapist (OT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide skilled treatment for people who suffer from mental, physical, developmental or emotional conditions to develop, recover or maintain daily living and work skills</li> <li>• Practice in all health care settings: private clinic, hospital, nursing home, home health, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College degree: BA or BS</li> <li>• Graduate school: Two-year occupational therapy program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate from an accredited occupational therapy program</li> <li>• Master's degree required for graduation after 2007</li> <li>• Pass a national certification/ licensure exam</li> <li>• Licensure required in Washington state</li> <li>• Continuing education required to maintain licensure</li> <li>• Physician referral required</li> </ul>
Chiropractor (DC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze, diagnose and treat the vertebral subluxation complex, articular dysfunctions and musculoskeletal disorders</li> <li>• Restore and maintain health, recognize the recuperative powers of the body</li> <li>• Perform chiropractic adjustments to correct spinal misalignment that interferes with the nervous system</li> <li>• Practice in private clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 90 hours of college education (degree not required)</li> <li>• Chiropractic program: four years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate from an accredited chiropractic program</li> <li>• Pass a national exam</li> <li>• Licensure required in Washington state</li> <li>• Continuing education required to maintain licensure</li> <li>• Physician referral not required by law</li> </ul>

(Health Professions continued on back)

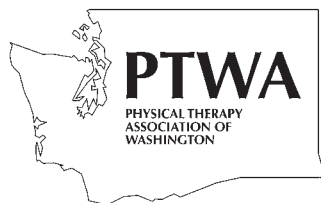
Questions? Contact the Physical Therapy Association of Washington at 800-554-5569, x 10 or jackiebarry@ptwa.org

(Health Professions continued from front)

Practitioner	Description	Educational Requirements	Licensure and Other Requirements (in Washington state)
Athletic Trainer (ATC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specialize in preventing, recognizing, managing and rehabilitating injuries that result from athletic activity</li> <li>Work under the supervision of a physician</li> <li>Treat in settings where healthy but injured people are being treated, including private clinics, schools, stadiums and sports clubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College degree in athletic training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an accredited athletic training curriculum</li> <li>Licensure required in Washington state</li> <li>Pass national certification exam administered by the Board of Certification (BOC)</li> <li>Continuing education not required in Washington state to maintain licensure</li> <li>May treat athletic injuries without a referral but other injuries require referral by another health care provider</li> </ul>
Massage Practitioner (LMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massage therapy is used as a means of addressing painful ailments, relieving tired and overworked muscles, reducing stress and promoting general health through external pressure on the soft tissues of the body</li> <li>Practice in private clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduation from a state-approved massage therapy program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a state-approved massage program or apprenticeship</li> <li>Pass state administered exam</li> <li>Licensure required in Washington state</li> <li>Continuing education not required in Washington state to maintain licensure</li> </ul>

## Other Professions

Practitioner	Description	Educational Requirements	Licensure and Other Requirements (in Washington state)
Personal Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design exercise routines and teach exercises to their clients</li> <li>Lead, instruct and motivate individuals or groups in exercise activities</li> <li>Help clients assess their level of physical fitness and set and reach fitness goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education and training required depends on the specific type of fitness work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No national certification exists</li> <li>Fitness facilities may require formal fitness training as a requirement of employment</li> <li>No licensure required or other regulation in Washington state</li> </ul>
Exercise Physiologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design exercise programs to reduce or reverse the progression of disease</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education and training required depends on the specific type of fitness work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No national certification exists</li> <li>Facilities may require formal fitness training as a requirement of employment</li> <li>No licensure required or other regulation in Washington state</li> </ul>



### Some websites to visit:

- [moveforwardpt.com](http://moveforwardpt.com) — Get treatment advice about conditions, body parts — and get your questions answered by a physical therapist. You may also locate a PT near where you live or work.
- [apta.org](http://apta.org) — American Physical Therapy Association
- [apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW) - Chapter 18 details legal requirements for all professions

For more information, contact PTWA at 1-800-554-5569, x10 or [jackiebarry@ptwa.org](mailto:jackiebarry@ptwa.org). [www.ptwa.org](http://www.ptwa.org)