

Do I need a referral for Physical Therapy? If so, how do I get one?

In many states, Physical Therapists have what is known as ‘direct access’ meaning, patients can legally see them directly, without referral. However, some insurance companies require referral in order to pay. So, if you don’t want to risk being stuck with the bill yourself, you should call your insurance company and ask them.

If you do need a referral for Physical Therapy, you should talk with the medical provider (physician, physician’s assistant or nurse practitioner) who has seen you for and talked with you about this problem. If you haven’t seen anyone about the problem, then talk with the provider you are most comfortable with. They may want to see you in the office prior to making the referral to get a good history, do some tests and discuss options.

Physical therapy is always a good option, at least for an evaluation, to see if the PT can give you any additional treatment options. Remind your provider that PT is a non-invasive, conservative approach and that it does not limit other future options like medication or surgery. For this reason, Physical Therapy is often a good first step. If symptoms can be resolved with PT, then the other procedures and potential side effects can be avoided. If PT does not help or does not fully resolve your symptoms, you can look at other options then.

It is always your right to pursue Physical Therapy, or any other treatment, prior to other more invasive procedures. If the Physical Therapist evaluates you and finds nothing that she or he thinks PT can address, they will be honest and tell you that, encourage you to go back to see your primary provider and will likely call the referring provider or send a written report about the evaluation findings.

It is also encouraged that you and/or your primary provider (physician, physician’s assistant or nurse practitioner) call the Physical Therapist and ask her or him more questions about the evaluation process and treatment options.

Referral to Physical Therapy should be in writing and signed by the primary provider. Referral can come from a family physician, an internal medicine physician, a urologist, an OB/ GYN, a Urogynecologist, a surgeon, a Physician’s Assistant, a Nurse Practitioner and any other medical specialist.