

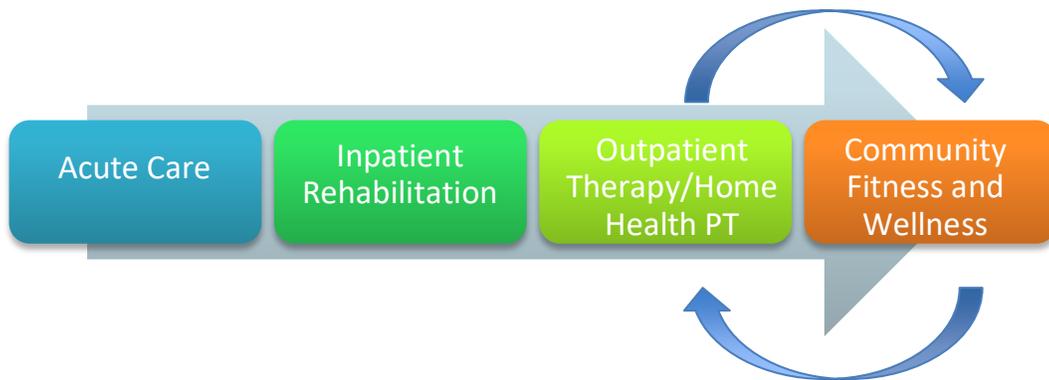
How to Bridge the Gap Between Physical Therapy and Lifelong Physical Activity: Client Handout

What can I expect from Physical Therapy?

Physical therapy (PT) helps you move better, move more, and be healthy so you can do the work and play activities that matter the most to you. You may have PT in the acute care, inpatient, outpatient or home health setting (see Figure 1). PT is there to help you improve your daily function, manage your condition and improve your overall fitness and wellness.

Reasons for stopping skilled PT care and starting community fitness and wellness may include meeting personal and PT goals, other personal priorities and time commitments, and/or insurance benefits and regulations.

Figure 1: Continuum of Physical Therapy for Individuals with Neurological Conditions



Exercise and physical activity are important tools to help you achieve your goals in PT. After an initial episode of PT ends, it is important for you to continue to be physically active and exercise. Physical activity and exercise can help you:

- Enhance recovery, stimulate brain health, and may slow disease progression.
- Promote independence and reduce physical assistance needed from others.
- Optimize physical health and wellness by improving, or maintaining, flexibility, strength, endurance, balance, bone mineral density, insulin regulation, and reducing risk of secondary medical conditions.
- Develop and maintain social support
- Increase positive mental health and decrease the risk of anxiety and depression.
- Improve overall quality of life

How can I stay active after Physical Therapy?

You have many options for continuing physical activity, recovering and maintaining function and being well after PT through community fitness and wellness. These options range from being physically active and exercising on your own at home to hiring a trainer knowledgeable on adaptive fitness and going to a local accessible gym/fitness center. The **Values, Goals, and Physical Activity/ Exercise Action Plan PT-Client Worksheet** includes 3 steps to developing your own personalized plan for lifelong physical activity and exercise. This involves knowing your values, setting meaningful goals, and developing an action plan.

- For example, if you value family, health and independence...
 - Your goal may be: In six months, I will propel my wheelchair for 1 mile in 20 minutes without a rest break and with no shoulder muscle soreness so I can accompany my daughter on a walk.
 - Your action plan may then include: Riding an arm bike for aerobic exercise 3 days per week at the gym for 45 minutes at a moderate to heavy effort, 5 – 8/ 10 on the rate of perceived exertion 0 – 10 scale. To help you monitor your progress, you decide to go to PT for a check-up in 6 months to test aerobic exercise capacity, heart rate, blood pressure, and a 6-minute wheelchair push test.

When should I return to Physical Therapy?

Your needs may change over time. You can, and should, consider seeing your physical therapist from time to time to get input and help addressing your needs.

These additional visits with PT may be periodic assessments or check-ins every 3, 6 or 12 months. They may be weekly or bimonthly visits to help you maintain function or slow decline. Work with your PT and healthcare team to determine what is best for you.

Additional resources to help you be active: Resources include people, facilities, and services.

- **General Resources for Physical Activity, Health and Wellness Client Handout:** includes links to programs and facilities across the United States.
- **Questions to Ask of Post-Rehabilitation Facilities Client Handout:** includes questions that you may want to ask of these programs and facilities.

Ask your PT or healthcare team about other resources in your area.