

Achieving Your Physical Therapy Goals

5 Ways to Get the Most Out of Your Program

Physical therapy is an important part of recovery for those who've suffered an injury or had surgery. The right program can help you regain strength and mobility, and get you moving again without pain and discomfort. In some cases, physical therapy can even help avoid surgery or costly medications and associated side effects.

But physical therapy has a lot of other uses, too, including:

- **Improving balance and reducing the risk of falls:** Physical therapy exercises focusing on the knees, ankles and hips can help older adults avoid dangerous falls and increase their ability to remain independent.
- **Preventing injury:** Abnormal movements and joint and muscle stress — especially those incurred during sports or at work — increase the risk of injury. But physical therapists can design programs to combat this and reduce the risk of joint and muscle damage.
- **Recovering from stroke:** Physical therapy can help improve movement and regain some independence through techniques such as that work on balance, strength and flexibility.

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However, for all its benefits, physical therapy can only be as successful as you make it. Here are some tips on getting the most out of your program:

- **Listen to your physical therapist.** He or she will work with you to map out a program based on your specific needs, so it's important to participate. In many cases, you'll have homework, or additional exercises you need to perform outside of your appointments. Make sure to do as your therapist recommends. Skipping or doing extra may set you back so ask questions if you feel you need something different.
- **Keep your appointments.** You may think it's no big deal to skip a session, but each is designed to be part of a larger therapy program and helps pave the way to healing. Your therapist can help plan a program around your busy schedule or to "catch up" from a missed appointment.
- **Make sure you understand treatment.** What is the extent of your injury and what can you realistically accomplish with treatment? Be sure to also ask how to spot problems and for tips on avoiding further injury. Physical therapy is more successful when you understand what to do and why.
- **Discuss any potential problems.** Are you experiencing new pain? Does it seem as if you're not progressing? Do you want more or less to work on? Bring these matters up with your physical therapist. Therapy needs to be changed as you change. If you are not getting better, you may need a referral to another specialist or to schedule a visit with your primary care provider.
- **Give yourself a pat on the back.** Maybe your big success is being able to walk a certain distance without stopping. Maybe it is to play with your grandchildren or get back to work. Whatever your milestones may be, make sure to recognize and celebrate them. The results of physical therapy can sometimes seem like they're slow in showing themselves. By celebrating victories along the way, you may help keep yourself motivated.

To learn more about physical therapy services available at Cumberland Healthcare, call Rehabilitation Services at (715) 822-6167 in Cumberland and (715) 986-2022 in Turtle Lake, or visit our website at www.cumberlandhealthcare.com.

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