

Physiotherapist

Physiotherapists work with people to help with a range of problems which affect movement using exercise, massage and other techniques.

This page has information on the role of an physiotherapist with links to further information.

Working life

You'll help and treat people with physical problems caused by illness, injury, disability or ageing. You'll see human movement as central to the health and wellbeing of individuals so they aim to identify and maximise movement. As well as treating people, you promote good health and advise people on how to avoid injury.

You'll treat many types of conditions, such as:

- neurological ([stroke](#) ^[1], multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's)
- neuromusculoskeletal (back pain, whiplash associated disorder, sports injuries, arthritis)
- [cardiovascular](#) ^[2] (chronic heart disease, rehabilitation after heart attack)
- [respiratory](#) ^[3] (asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis)

Once they have diagnosed the client's movement problem, you'll then work with the patient to decide how to treat it. This could include:



- manual therapy (such as massage)
- therapeutic exercise
- electrotherapy (such as [ultrasound](#) ^[4], heat or cold)

In the NHS, you may work in hospitals where you're needed in nearly every department. In [intensive care](#) [5], for example, you're needed for round-the-clock chest physiotherapy to keep unconscious patients breathing.

You may also work in:

- outpatients' departments
- women's health
- elderly care
- [stroke](#) [1] services
- orthopaedics
- mental health and learning disability services
- occupational health
- paediatrics

More physiotherapy is also being delivered in the local community so you could be based in health centres and treat patients in their own homes, nursing homes, day centres or schools.

You could also work outside the NHS, for example in:

- private hospitals and clinics
- sports clubs and gyms
- private practice

Wherever you work, you can choose from a range of equipment to use with patients such as gyms, hydrotherapy and high-tech equipment for specialist therapy.

You may work alone or in a team alongside health and/or social care professionals. Depending on where you work, this could include [occupational therapists](#) [6], [GPs](#) [7], [health visitors](#) [8], [district nurses](#) [9] and [social workers](#) [10]. You may supervise the work of support workers such as [physiotherapy assistants](#) [11].

Outside the NHS, you could work with sports coaches or personal trainers.

Want to learn more?

- [Find out more about the entry requirements and training for physiotherapy](#) [12]
- Pay and conditions

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In the NHS, you would work standard hours, which are likely to be around 37.5 a week. You may work shifts, including evenings, nights and weekends. You'll start at band 5 of the [Agenda for Change pay scale](#) [13] with opportunities to progress with more experience.

Elsewhere, your hours will depend on where they work. For example, a sports physiotherapist is likely to work at weekends. In private practice, your hours depend on client needs. You may work evenings and weekends to suit private clients.

You may also have to travel between client appointments.

- Where the role can lead

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Once qualified, you can join the [Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#) [14]. You'll have to keep your skills and knowledge up to date with continuing professional development (CPD).

You may choose to specialise in a particular area of practice such as sports injuries, critical care, care of the elderly or working with children or cancer patients. Teaching and research are also options.

You could also move into management, either within physiotherapy services or general management. As head of a local physiotherapy service you would be responsible both for a team of staff and for managing a budget.

Some physiotherapists set up their own clinics, on their own or with other professionals.

There may be opportunities to work overseas.

- Job market and vacancies

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In November 2018, there were 55,293 physiotherapists registered with the [Health and Care Professions Council](#) [15].

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy has a [jobs section](#) [16] on its website.

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) [17]. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations on [NHS Choices](#) [18].

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. The same will be true if you are applying for a university course funded by the NHS.

[Find out more about NHS values.](#) [19]

- Further information

Expand / collapse

- [Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#) [20]
- [Health and Care Professions Council](#) [21]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Physiotherapy assistants/support workers](#) [22]
- [Occupational therapist](#) [23]
- [Osteopath](#) [24]
- [Occupational therapy support worker](#) [25]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/physiotherapist>

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Cardiovascular>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Respiratory>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Ultrasound>
- [5] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/occupational-therapist>
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- [13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [14] <http://www.csp.org.uk/>
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- [23] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/occupational-therapist>
- [24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/osteopath>
- [25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/occupational-therapy-support-worker>