

Q&A – Direct Access

Ask the Physical Therapist

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Q: What is direct access?

- Direct access allows individuals to be evaluated and treated by a physical therapist without physician referral for conditions within the scope of physical therapy practice
- Direct access came about due to stresses within state legislatures the healthcare environment to increase access and control costs
- Physical therapists treat both non-surgical and surgical conditions associated primarily with the musculoskeletal system (including the arms, legs, and spine) however also treat impairments in some of the body's other systems such as the neurological system
- If you are unfamiliar with physical therapy practice it is likely best that you see your family physician, if findings are outside of the scope of physical therapy you be referred to your physician for the appropriate course of treatment

Q: What are the limitations?

- Governmental insurances such as Medicare and Medicaid require a physician referral prior to seeing a physical therapist
- There are also several private insurance companies that follow governmental guidelines and also require a physician referral

Keywords: patient education, direct access, referral, physical therapy, insurance