



## NEWSLETTER

September 2008 #2

### ***What is Physical Therapy?***

Physical therapy is a health care specialty involved with evaluating, diagnosing, and treating disorders of the musculoskeletal system. The ultimate goal of physical therapy is to restore maximal functional independence to each individual patient. To achieve this goal, physical treatment such as manual therapy, joint mobilization, education, body mechanics instruction exercise, electricity and special massage are utilized.

Physical therapy is provided by physical therapists, who are licensed health care professionals with a master's or doctorate degree in physical therapy. Physical therapists evaluate, diagnose, and manage the physical therapy treatment plan, customizing it to each individual's needs.

### **EXERCISE:**

Exercising daily plays a crucial role in the process of healing and recovering from injury or disease. This is the goal of physical therapy exercises. Stretching and strengthening activities are only a few types of physical therapy exercises. Balance, joint control, stabilization and muscle re-training are other types of important physical therapy exercises.

### **HEAT:**

Physical therapists wrap moist hot packs in several layers of towels. They are then applied directly on the exposed area that needs treatment. The heat provided by the hot packs has several important benefits. It relaxes tight muscles causing tissues to relax. This decreases pain caused by muscle tension or spasms. It also causes vasodilatation of the blood vessels which increases circulation to the area. Patients with muscle strains, spasms, or arthritis often benefit from treatment with moist hot packs.

### **COLD:**

Cold packs are a frozen gel substance used by physical therapists to treat areas of pain and inflammation. The cold packs are wrapped in wet towel and applied directly to the area in need of treatment. The cold transferred to the patient's skin, muscle, and tissue has several beneficial effects. The cold temperature causes vasoconstriction of the blood vessels in the area. This decreases the inflammation in the area. By decreasing inflammation, pain and swelling are decreased. This in turn decreases pain. Management with ice is the first line of treatment in acute injury.

### **ELECTRICITY:**

Electrical stimulation uses an electrical current to cause a single muscle or a group of muscles to contract. By placing electrodes on the skin in various locations the physical therapist can recruit the appropriate muscle fibers. Contracting the muscle via electrical stimulation helps strengthen the affected muscle. The physical therapist can change the current setting to allow for a forceful or gentle muscle contraction. Along with increasing muscle strength, the contraction of the muscle also promotes blood supply to the area that assists in healing.

## **SOFT AND DEEP TISSUE MOBILIZATION:**

This is a scientific method of manipulating the soft tissues of the body to have specific effect. Its objective is the restoration of function, release of tension and the re-establishment of the contours where this is desirable.

### ***When is Physical Therapy Necessary?***

Physical therapy is ordered by a physician when it is felt that such a course of treatment would be beneficial. It is offered to a wide variety of patient's including newborn babies, children, adults, and geriatrics.

Physical therapy is useful in treating many different medical disorders. and injuries, neurological and muscular illness, as well as cardiopulmonary diseases are only a few pathologic conditions which physical therapy plays a treatment role in.

Through patient and therapist interaction, physical therapy can help restore movement and function helping patients return to their prior level of independence.

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***171 Pleasant St. Suite 101 Concord, NH 03301 603-228-7500***

***www.coppolapt.com Email: [steve@coppolapt.com](mailto:steve@coppolapt.com)***