

PHYSIO TIPS

IN AUGUST

WHAT DO PHYSIOTHERAPISTS REALLY DO?

Busting the Myths



Physio Tips is a monthly newsletter aimed at educating the public regarding the latest's evidence in injury management, without all the medical jargon. We will keep it simple and concise, but full of knowledge gems in order to empower and equip you.

REACH OUT TO US

Physiotherapists are specialised massage therapists right? This is a common belief that is based on archaic physiotherapy practises - The truth is that the field of physiotherapy is both dynamic and scientific and has evolved significantly over the years in order to reflect the latest research.

Here are a few tips on what physiotherapists can and **should** do based on the current research evidence available



Myth 1: Physiotherapists always use manual therapy

Physiotherapists aim to restore optimal function and movement and can use a variety of treatment modalities to achieve this - massage and mobilisations may or may not be part of an individual's treatment plan. In fact, exercise and strengthening has the most evidence behind it and should therefore form the most important part of treatment. Manual techniques are sometimes useful to address limitations to initiating movement and rehabilitation.

Myth 2: Physiotherapists focus on quick fixes

Certain modalities, like dry needling and electrotherapy, are often used as quick fixes - these techniques are however poorly supported by evidence and should only be used when a therapist believes it will improve movement patterns and facilitate rehabilitation. At Therapy in Action we believe in sustainable solutions, even if this means more time.



Myth 3: I can only see a physiotherapist if my Doctor recommends it

In South Africa, Physiotherapists are recognised as first line practitioners. This means you can see a physiotherapist without a referral from a Doctor. There is a global health initiative focusing on "Exercise is Medicine" and therefore nowadays Doctors might even prescribe exercise or physiotherapy in stead of medication. Physiotherapists are also capable of screening for conditions/illnesses that might require referral to a Doctor or specialist.

Myth 4: Physiotherapists prescribe generic exercises

The one-size-fits-all approach simply does not work. Each patient is unique and no injury is ever identical - this warrants customized rehabilitation exercises to target specific deficits/problems. This is why googling exercises for specific injuries can often be in vain.





Myth 5: Physiotherapists only treat physical pathology

Across the medical field all practitioners are expected to follow a biopsychosocial approach - this means that behind each injury there is a person with a specific context and emotions that can not be ignored. Very often, pain can not be linked to a specific injury or incident. A biopsychosocial approach by a physiotherapist can help to find the right approach to address unexplained symptoms.

Myth 6: Physiotherapy is expensive and you have to keep going back

Physiotherapy aims to empower patients to self-manage by equipping individuals with the right tools and exercises. Our bodies are great at adapting and recovering and we often just need a bit of guidance to optimise this. Evidence supports an active approach of education and exercise - and once you're on the right track this can be done independently without further cost implications.



Myth 7: Physiotherapists only treat sports injuries

The fields of physiotherapy include: neurology, respiratory, musculoskeletal and paediatrics. All physios have sufficient knowledge of all these fields, but most choose one or more speciality. Musculoskeletal therapists can treat a variety of conditions related to pain or loss of function. These include overuse injuries, degenerative conditions, pain syndromes, post-surgical rehab as well as sports injuries.

Myth 8: Physiotherapy is always painful

The success of any hands on techniques is not dependent on how hard or deep the pressure is, but rather dependent on the neural changes caused by pressure and touch. These neurological effects can be achieved without eliciting more pain on already sensitive structures. No pain, no gain is not relevant, and hurt does not always mean harm - It is the role of the physiotherapist to find this balance for optimal healing and recovery.



READ MORE ABOUT US

"If your therapist only does a 'treatment' to you and misses out the 'get it moving/rehab/graded recovery/functional recovery process - then it is my opinion that your therapist is a complete waste of time"

Louis Gifford, physiotherapist and pain pioneer

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MOTION is LOTION

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Myths about Back Pain

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