

What Does an Early Intervention Physical Therapist do?

The definition of a Physical Therapist will often describe a medical professional whose focus is improving strength, function, and mobility. A Physical Therapist in Early Intervention will work on much more than just those general techniques of stretching, strengthening, and gross motor development. The most important piece of being a PT in Early Intervention is remembering that everything you do during your sessions needs to have a focus on the family and their daily lives, and how they can incorporate the exercises/strategies into their day. In order for success the PT and family must work together as a team!

Working as a Team we hope to improve the child's ability to participate in age appropriate activities in their home and in the community with their peers. There are a variety of ways a PT and the family can help their child thrive in their daily lives and it all starts with understanding what a PT will focus on, how they will work during their sessions to achieve those goals, and what the family should do to help work toward success.

A Physical Therapist in Early Intervention will...

- ◆ Work on meeting developmental milestones such as; rolling, sitting, crawling, standing, and walking.
- ◆ Improve age appropriate strength, balance, and coordination.
- ◆ Manage tight muscles/improve joint range of motion due to muscle restrictions (i.e. Torticollis)
- ◆ Evaluate the need for orthotics (braces) or other supportive equipment.
- ◆ Evaluate for appropriate seating and mobility options.
- ◆ Assist families with ordering any necessary adaptive equipment (braces or wheelchairs)
- ◆ Ensure that the focus is on helping the child be an active part of the family and finding opportunities to interact with their peers despite developmental delays.

During a home visit a Physical Therapist may...

- ◆ Teach how to stretch specific muscles to improve mobility.
- ◆ Focus on belly play with both infants and toddlers.
- ◆ Get creative with crawling and climbing activities by using couch cushions, pillows, blankets and even laundry baskets!
- ◆ Discuss strategies that allow the families to easily incorporate stretching and strengthening activities into the child's play or other activities of daily living (ex: stretching neck or ankles at each diaper change).
- ◆ Trial adaptive seating and mobility equipment.
- ◆ Identify the need for further testing or consults with other medical professionals (Neurologist or orthopedist)
- ◆ Consulting with other professionals within Early Intervention if other developmental concerns arise.

Carry over is key in Early Intervention!!! Our goal is to teach each family how to assist their child and enhance their overall motor development. Following a home visit a family should...

Pick 2-3 activities that the PT suggested and try to incorporate them into the child's day over the week before the next scheduled visit. Think about what seemed to work well and what didn't. If something feels like you're doing it wrong, stretches for example, hold off and ask the PT to review the technique. Try to always keep it playful! You will have much more success with the little ones.

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