**Aim:** to develop, maintain and restore the movement and functional ability of the body.

Physiotherapists have a holistic approach to the assessment and treatment of patients. Not only do they examine, diagnose and treat the immediate problem; they then teach you how to take care of yourself by showing you how to do exercises and how to use your body properly to gain strength and mobility and prevent recurring injury.

**Education**

Physiotherapists in Australia complete a four-year university degree and are required to register annually with a professional board.

**Where do they work?**

Physiotherapists work in a variety of places including hospitals, private practices, rehabilitation centres, nursing homes, schools and sporting clubs. To see a physiotherapist at a public hospital you require a referral from a doctor, however if you choose to see a physiotherapist at a private practice this is not necessary.

**Treatment approaches**

Physiotherapy incorporates a number of different treatment techniques.

These include:

- **Exercise programs** – posture retraining, muscle strengthening, fitness training, hydrotherapy and stretching
- **Electrotherapies** – ultrasound, laser therapy, electrical therapy to reduce pain, heat and ice therapy
- **Manual therapies** – stretching, joint mobilisation and manipulation, massage
- **Chest physio** – secretion clearance techniques, breathing exercises, spirometry
- **Mobility aid prescription** – assessing need for walking sticks/frames, crutches, wheelchairs, Taping, splinting, plastering, orthotics

**Common conditions**

Physiotherapists treat a wide range of different conditions. These include:

- **Musculoskeletal** – treatment of muscles, bones and joints. Includes back pain, sporting and work-related injuries, arthritis, sprains and strains and decreased mobility.
- **Cardiopulmonary** – treatment of disorders of the cardiopulmonary system. Includes asthma, emphysema, bronchitis and rehab after heart or lung surgery.
- **Women's health** – treatment of conditions associated with women. Includes pre and post-natal conditions, incontinence and education.
- **Paediatrics** – treatment of developmental conditions in children. Includes developmental, musculoskeletal, respiratory and neurological disorders and congenital abnormalities.

**Things to remember:**

- Early referral is better than late. Physiotherapy is more effective in acute conditions.
- Physiotherapists are university trained, registered professionals.
- You require a doctor’s referral to see a physiotherapist at Hospital.
- Waiting times may exist.
- Healthcare Interpreter Services are available if required.