

## Training

To become a physiotherapist you must complete a four year degree in physiotherapy. The course can be taken at Wintec (Hamilton), AUT (Auckland), or University of Otago (Dunedin). There are limited places available.

Courses consist of theory on campus and clinical practice in hospitals or the community.

Helpful subjects are English, biology, chemistry and physics. Health and PE would be useful also. You will need University Entrance. Wintec give preference to students from the wider Midlands regions and students that demonstrate community engagement. AUT select students with the highest level of academic achievement. Physiotherapy students at Otago University complete the Health Science First Year, then apply for entry into 2<sup>nd</sup> year physiotherapy. Check institution websites for up-to-date information.

## Where do they work?

Physiotherapists work in hospitals, sports centres, rehabilitation and community centres, private physiotherapy practices, health organisations, workplaces, patients' homes.

## Personal Qualities

Physiotherapists spend their time with people from a range of ages, cultures, backgrounds and lifestyles.

A physiotherapist needs to be:

- supportive and encouraging
- dependable
- persuasive and persistent
- good listeners
- tolerant of other cultures



Information collated by NZIRH  
Where to go for more information:

[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)

[www.kiaorahauora.co.nz](http://www.kiaorahauora.co.nz)

[physio.org.nz](http://physio.org.nz)

NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF RURAL HEALTH  
PO Box 834, CAMBRIDGE 3450



p: 07 8239274  
email: [admin@nzirh.org.nz](mailto:admin@nzirh.org.nz)  
[www.nzirh.org.nz](http://www.nzirh.org.nz)

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# Physiotherapist



## **Physiotherapy**

Physiotherapists help people to correct problems with their physical ability and to regain or maintain mobility. They work with people to become physically independent after a problem caused by physical or neurological disorders.

Physiotherapists manage a diverse range of conditions but some of them work in specialised areas such as:

- Musculoskeletal and sports physiotherapy
- Neuro-rehabilitation (brain and nervous system)
- Cardio-respiratory physiotherapy
- Paediatric physiotherapy
- Hand therapy
- Women's health
- Acupuncture
- Mental health
- Neurology (for conditions like spinal cord injury, stroke, Parkinson's Disease, multiple sclerosis)
- Occupational health

Physiotherapists will treat the problem and show the patient how to reduce the pain or other effects. They then give exercises or instructions to reduce the possibility of the problem reoccurring.

## **What do they do?**

Physiotherapists may:

- diagnose the physical functional problems a patient is suffering from
- decide on an appropriate treatment
- carry out treatments to decrease pain and improve movement
- give patients an exercise plan
- educate the patient on how to prevent the injury reoccurring
- help people who have had strokes and accidents
- inform caregivers and family about the patient's programme

Physiotherapists use a range of techniques to help their patients. These include manipulation and mobilisation, massage, hydrotherapy, exercises, ultrasound and acupuncture. Educating and encouraging their clients helps them to gain the confidence needed to return to normal activities.

The chances of getting a job as a physiotherapist are good.

## **Working in a hospital**

A physiotherapist in a hospital works as part of a team of health professionals in patient care. A physiotherapist will assess new patients to determine what treatment the patient may need so that they can become fit and safe enough, to go home. Treatment may involve mobilisation after surgery, treatment of a chest infection, helping someone to walk again after an accident or stroke.

## **Private practice**

A physiotherapist working in private practice treats private patients. They may also work with a sports team, going to the games and practices to provide physiotherapy as required (e.g. strapping, massage). Some physiotherapists run exercise or pilates classes. Others do workplace assessments and suggest improvements for workers in pain.

## **Community**

A community physiotherapist works with groups and individuals providing support for long-term conditions. Often outpatients find it difficult to get to hospital for their treatment and rehabilitation. With a physiotherapist working in the community, it is easier to continue their physiotherapy treatment.