

Direct Access to Physical Therapy

What is Direct Access?

September 1, 2019, direct access to physical therapy services became available in the state of Texas.

Direct Access is a law that allows patients to seek and receive examination and treatment from a licensed physical therapist without a referral from a physician.

A referral must be obtained from a qualified healthcare provider if the physical therapy treatment exceeds the number of days allowable by Texas law:

- **10 consecutive business days:** PT with a *doctoral degree in physical therapy* or who has completed a *minimum of thirty (30) continuing competence activities in the area of differential diagnosis*
- **15 consecutive business days:** PT with a doctoral degree in physical therapy who has completed a *residency or fellowship*

Can all therapists provide Direct Access?

No, a physical therapist must have been licensed to practice physical therapy for at least one (1) year, meet the educational requirements as set forth above and must be covered by professional liability insurance in order to provide direct access.

How will Memorial Hermann Health System offer direct access to physical therapy?

The law allows patients to self-refer for evaluation and treatment of common musculoskeletal conditions.

At Memorial Hermann, patients are able to schedule an initial evaluation at one of our Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation or Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports Medicine Institute facilities. During the initial evaluation, the physical therapist will determine if physical therapy is the best treatment option for them. The physical therapist will then develop a personalized treatment plan so that treatment can begin. If treatment is needed beyond the allowed days, a referral from a healthcare provider will be required.

Do Medicare patients qualify for direct access to physical therapy?

Medicare patients that visit a Memorial Hermann Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation or Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports Medicine Institute facility without a referral can be seen for an initial evaluation. If the physical therapist determines patient is a candidate for physical therapy, the treatment plan will be sent to the patient's healthcare provider for signature. After receiving a signed plan of care, physical therapy can continue. If a patient does not have a referring healthcare provider, Memorial Hermann physical therapists can provide information to help secure a referral.

Will insurance cover Direct Access?

Physical therapy under Direct Access is covered by most insurance plans. However, the rules of coverage may vary from one provider to another. Some may have documentation requirements that the state does not. Keep in mind that some insurance policies may require a visit to the primary care provider first or may limit access to preferred providers only.

We encourage patients to talk to their insurance companies to confirm coverage requirements.

How will physicians and physical therapists collaborate for patient care?

Physical therapists will continue to communicate with the appropriate healthcare providers to deliver quality care for the patient. When necessary, patients will be referred to a healthcare provider if further evaluation or testing is indicated. Additionally, if the treatment needs to extend past 10 or 15 days, the physical therapist will refer to a physician for evaluation prior to continuing physical therapy treatment.

For additional information about Memorial Hermann Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation, visit memorialhermann.org/physical-therapy