

## Physical Therapist/Physical Therapist Assistant

- **PTA:** Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) graduate from universities, community colleges, or technical colleges with an associate's degree after two years of study. PTAs work under the direction of a physical therapist (PT). PTAs' duties can include assisting in instructing patients in exercises and activities of daily living (including physical modalities), using special equipment, collecting data on the patient's progress, and documenting and reporting on the patient's response. There are currently 234 PTA programs across the country.
- **PT:** Professional (entry-level) physical therapist education programs are offered at two degree levels: doctoral and master's.
  - **Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) programs:** More and more students are choosing to graduate with this entry-level degree. The majority of DPT programs require students to enter with an undergraduate degree, though some will admit students after three years of undergraduate work, and a few admit students at the freshman level. Students are in the program between six and nine semesters. As of September 2005, there are 142 DPT programs across the country. APTA's vision is that by the year 2020, the majority of practicing physical therapists will possess a DPT degree.
  - **Master's degree (MPT, MSPT, MS) programs:** On average, these programs require that students have at least three years of undergraduate work. However, some require students to enter with an undergraduate degree, and some admit students at the freshman level. Like the DPT programs, the students are in the program between six and nine semesters. As of September 2005, there are 68 programs across the country offering master's degrees.

### Are there prerequisite courses for PT programs?

Prerequisites vary among programs. To be safe, check with the [programs](#) that you are interested in to see the specific requirements. An APTA survey of schools found that more than 50% of PT programs require courses such as anatomy and physiology, chemistry, physics, statistics, psychology, and general biology. Other courses that may be required include English, social science, humanities, computers, medical terminology, exercise physiology, human development, kinesiology, organic chemistry, research methods, cell biology, and pathology.

Information from [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)