

Physical Therapy Checklist

A practical physical therapy checklist to help you stay consistent, do home exercises correctly and get the most from every session.

Before You Start Therapy

- Write down your main goals, such as walking farther or climbing stairs without pain
- Gather referral paperwork, imaging, and a current medication list
- Confirm how many sessions are planned and how often
Knowing the plan up front helps you budget time and stay committed.
- Ask whether to ice, heat, or take medication before or after exercises
- Set up a small, clear space at home for daily exercises
- Prepare any equipment your therapist recommends, like a resistance band or chair

Do Your Home Exercises

- Do every prescribed exercise the number of times your therapist set
- Move slowly and focus on correct form over speed or extra reps
- Warm up gently before harder movements and cool down after
- Pick a consistent time of day so exercises become a habit
Linking them to an existing routine, like after breakfast, helps consistency.
- Use a mirror or video to check your form against the therapist's demonstration
- Stop and rest if you feel dizzy, short of breath, or sharp pain

Stay Consistent and Motivated

- Schedule exercise sessions in your calendar like real appointments
- Set phone reminders for each daily exercise block
- Ask a family member or caregiver to help you stay accountable
- Keep going on busy or low-energy days, even with a shorter session
- Reward yourself for completing a full week of exercises

Track Your Progress

- Log the date, exercises done, and reps after each session
- Rate your pain level before and after exercises on a 0 to 10 scale
- Note new gains, such as more range of motion or longer walking distance
- Record any swelling, stiffness, or setbacks and what may have caused them
- Bring this log to every appointment so your therapist can adjust the plan

Prepare Questions for Your Therapist

- Ask which exercises matter most if you are short on time
- Ask what level of soreness is normal versus a warning sign
- Ask when you can safely return to specific activities or sports
- Ask how to modify exercises if one is too hard or too easy
- Ask what milestones signal you are ready to progress

Follow the Plan Safely

- Do not skip ahead or add exercises your therapist has not approved
- Attend every scheduled session and reschedule promptly if you must miss one

- Keep your doctor and therapist updated on new symptoms or medications
- Report falls, new pain, numbness, or sudden weakness right away
- Important: this checklist is general information, not medical advice; always follow the specific guidance of your physical therapist and doctor