

Essential Questions to Ask a Physical Therapist About Senior Care - Checklist

Physical therapy plays a crucial role in maintaining and improving the quality of life for seniors. Whether recovering from surgery, managing chronic conditions, or working to prevent falls, asking the right questions can help ensure your loved one receives the most effective care. This guide covers essential questions to discuss with physical therapists to optimize treatment outcomes and support your senior's independence.

How to use this checklist: Check off each question as you ask it, and use the note lines to record important answers and observations.

Assessment and Evaluation

- ☐ **1. What specific assessments will you conduct to evaluate my loved one's current physical condition?**

Understanding the comprehensive evaluation process helps families know what to expect and how the therapist will measure progress over time.

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- ☐ **2. What are the primary physical limitations or areas of concern you've identified?**

A clear assessment of specific mobility issues, strength deficits, or balance problems helps prioritize treatment goals and expectations.

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- ☐ **3. How do my loved one's other health conditions affect their physical therapy needs?**

Conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis can impact therapy approaches, so understanding these interactions is crucial for safe, effective treatment.

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□ **4. What baseline measurements will you use to track progress throughout treatment?**

Establishing clear metrics for strength, range of motion, balance, and functional abilities helps monitor improvement and adjust treatment plans.

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Treatment Planning

☐ 1. What are the primary goals of physical therapy for my loved one?

Clear, measurable goals help align expectations and provide motivation for both the patient and family throughout the treatment process.

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☐ 2. How long do you expect the treatment plan to last, and how frequently will sessions occur?

Understanding the timeline and frequency helps families plan schedules, transportation, and budget for the therapy process.

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☐ 3. What specific exercises and techniques will be included in the treatment plan?

Knowledge of planned interventions helps families understand what their loved one will experience and how they can provide support at home.

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□ **4. How will the treatment plan be modified as my loved one progresses or if challenges arise?**

Flexibility in treatment planning ensures therapy remains appropriate and effective as the patient's condition changes over time.

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Safety and Fall Prevention

☐ 1. What specific strategies will you use to address fall risk and improve balance?

Fall prevention is often a primary concern for seniors, so understanding targeted interventions for balance and stability is essential.

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☐ 2. What safety precautions are in place during therapy sessions?

Knowing how the therapist ensures safety during exercises and mobility training provides peace of mind for families.

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☐ 3. Are there any exercises or activities my loved one should avoid?

Understanding contraindications helps prevent injury and ensures safe participation in therapy and daily activities.

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□ **4. How will you teach my loved one to recognize and respond to physical limitations safely?**

Education about body awareness and safe movement patterns helps seniors maintain independence while avoiding risky situations.

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Home Exercise and Maintenance

☐ 1. What exercises should my loved one continue at home between sessions?

A home exercise program extends the benefits of therapy and helps maintain progress between formal sessions.

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☐ 2. How can family members or caregivers safely assist with home exercises?

Proper caregiver education ensures safe assistance and support for home exercise routines.

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☐ 3. What equipment or modifications might be needed in the home environment?

Identifying necessary adaptive equipment or environmental changes supports safe, independent movement at home.

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□ **4. How often should home exercises be performed, and how will you monitor compliance?**

Clear guidelines for frequency and follow-up help ensure consistent participation in the home program.

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Progress Monitoring

□ 1. How will you measure and communicate progress throughout treatment?

Regular progress updates help families understand improvements and adjust expectations as needed.

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□ 2. What signs indicate that physical therapy is working effectively?

Understanding positive indicators helps families recognize success and stay motivated throughout the treatment process.

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□ 3. When might it be appropriate to modify or discontinue physical therapy?

Clear criteria for treatment changes or completion help families make informed decisions about ongoing care.

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□ **4. What happens if my loved one experiences setbacks or plateaus in progress?**

Understanding how challenges are addressed provides confidence in the therapist's ability to adapt treatment as needed.

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Communication and Coordination

- ☐ **1. How do you coordinate with my loved one's physician and other healthcare providers?**

Effective communication between providers ensures integrated care and prevents conflicting recommendations.

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- ☐ **2. What should we do if my loved one experiences pain or discomfort after therapy sessions?**

Clear guidelines for managing post-therapy symptoms help families respond appropriately to their loved one's needs.

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- ☐ **3. How can we best communicate concerns or questions between appointments?**

Establishing communication channels ensures families can address issues promptly and maintain open dialogue with the therapy team.

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□ **4. What information should we share with you about my loved one's daily activities and challenges?**

Understanding what details are helpful allows families to provide valuable context that can improve treatment planning.

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Insurance and Practical Considerations

☐ 1. What does our insurance cover regarding physical therapy sessions?

Understanding coverage limits and costs helps families plan financially for the duration of treatment.

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☐ 2. Are there transportation services available if my loved one has difficulty getting to appointments?

Identifying transportation options ensures consistent attendance and removes barriers to receiving care.

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☐ 3. Can therapy be provided in the home setting if clinic visits become difficult?

Home health physical therapy options provide alternatives when mobility or transportation becomes challenging.

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□ **4. What community resources are available to support ongoing physical activity after formal therapy ends?**

Knowledge of local senior fitness programs, support groups, or recreational opportunities helps maintain long-term physical health.

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