



Q: What should I expect at my initial evaluation?

A: For the first appointment, we typically ask patients to arrive 15 minutes prior to their appointment time to sign documents, review insurance benefits, and complete our innovative digital predictive outcome assessment, called FOTO. During this time, the therapist reviews information within the patient chart submitted by the doctor. Once all necessary items are completed, the therapist will have a conversation with the patient about their current pain and dysfunction, past medical history, and specific goals you have for therapy. The therapist will take objective measurements and assess the muscles and joints to determine the best customized treatment plan. Typically we begin treatment day one so our patients can start having decreased pain and we can teach them strategies how to alleviate their pain long-term. Typically these initial sessions last 45 minutes to an hour.

Q: I'm not sure I can afford therapy, how much does it cost?

A: We understand that insurance and healthcare can be very overwhelming. That's why we provide the courtesy of verifying your insurance benefits before your first visit, so you will know what to expect. The good news is, we are in-network with most insurance carriers and we have variety of affordable payment options including HSA, FSA and a financing program. If you would like more information please stop by our therapy office and they will be more than happy to assist you.

Q: My condition is chronic, is surgery my only option?

A: There are times when surgery is the only option, but typically that is not the case. Surgery should be used as a last resort, once all conservative treatments have failed. Many research studies have shown that physical therapy in combination with medical management can be just as effective as surgery with eliminating pain and allowing the body to heal; especially with conditions such as stenosis, degenerative disc disease, meniscus tears, knee osteoarthritis, and carpal tunnel. The fact is surgery is expensive and has many risks, while physical therapy and pain management procedures such as injections and infusions carry significantly less risk with a fraction of the cost with very little recovery time. Even if surgery is the only option, physical therapy beforehand can often put the patient into better physical condition to withstand the surgery and provide faster and better outcomes afterwards.

Q: I've been managing my pain with my doctor with medications and injections. It's painful for me to workout. How is physical therapy going to help me?

A: The medical treatments at Commonwealth pain and spine are top-notch. They help manage the chemical and structural reasons for pain. However, this is only part of the equation, and often what patients miss out on, is taking advantage of the window medication and injections provide for your body to tolerate physical therapy. This window, is where we can change joint mobility and muscle patterns long-term so you aren't just managing the pain, but actually healing your body and getting out of pain. Doctors recommend physical therapy in conjunction with their treatments because they know that while their treatment help, they aren't addressing the root issues which are often weak and tight muscles, stiff joints and improper movement patterns the body has adapted to over time. We take the multi-disciplinary approach of treating symptoms and the root causes, which involves the therapists and physicians to be in constant communication about ongoing treatments and progress. At commonwealth pain and spine we are very passionate about teaching patients they don't have to "accept their pain", we want to show them they are in control and able to actually improve their pain and long-term quality of life.

Q: I have really bad balance and I'm often afraid I will fall, can physical therapy help with that?

A: The statistics show that 1 in every 4 elderly adults experience a fall each year. However, falling is not a normal part of aging. People don't believe me when I say this, but research actually shows that on average, a person in their 70's is able to stand on one leg at least 11 seconds without any support and without falling. So many people accept, that this is a natural part of aging, and it's such a myth. You can prevent falling, by targeted strengthening of hip and core muscles. Physical therapists are movement experts, we have a doctoral degree in movement and skeletal and muscular anatomy. We can create a customized treatment program that address the specific balance issues, whether that be ankle stiffness, hip weakness, or knee instability or a combination of things. It's so rewarding to watch our patients significantly improve their balance and decrease their falls, especially when they didn't think it was possible. This not only keeps our patients safe, but allows them to enjoy life and do things they didn't think they were able to do anymore.

Q: What is dry needling, is it the same thing as acupuncture?

A: Dry needling and acupuncture are the same in that they use a similar size needle, but that is the only similarity they share. Dry needling is a treatment technique based on western medicine that utilizes a very thin needle to release trigger points or “muscle knots”. When your muscles have a bunch of trigger points, they are unable to lengthen and shorten and get stuck in a spasm. Despite the myths, you cannot stretch a trigger point. That’s where the needling is so beneficial. The needling, allows these knots to flatten out, so that the muscle can move in the way it’s designed to and then we can use exercises to make it stronger. The biggest benefit of dry needling is the effects are pretty immediate, we can see a difference very quickly which allows us to progress the treatment program more quickly.

Q: What is Blood Flow Restriction Training? Is it safe?

A: Blood flow restriction training, or BFR, is an innovative technique that has the ability to improve muscular strength even when a person is very weak, or has other limiting symptoms. The way it works, is a specialized pressure cuff specifically decreases blood flow to the injured limb while the patient performs exercise for 5-10 minutes. The science behind it is when the blood vessels are slightly restricted, less oxygen gets to the muscle, so more muscle fibers are recruited which allows the patients to make greater strength gains while lifting lighter weight. This reduces the strain traditional exercise can place on muscles and joints while still allowing the muscles to get stronger.

Q: Can Physical Therapy help with my headaches?

A: Physical Therapy can be a huge asset in alleviating headaches as well as neck and jaw pain which can also be involved. Often the cause of the headaches can be muscular restrictions in the jaw, neck or head muscles. Physical Therapy can help release these tight muscles with dry needling or soft tissue mobilization as well as joint realignment with joint mobilizations and manipulation.

Q: My schedule is really tight and I don’t know if I will really benefit from physical therapy. How can I find out if it’s right for me?

A: We know our patients are busy, and the last thing most people want to do is drive to an appointment twice a week, especially for something they aren’t sure about. That’s why we offer 15 minute complimentary screens. If you’ve been dealing with a nagging injury or persistent pain, don’t keep waiting, just stop by the clinic and we can do a quick assessment and determine if physical therapy is appropriate or not. We will be honest with you on if and how we can be helpful, sometimes that’s giving you a couple stretching ideas, other times it’s doing a handful of treatment sessions. Not everyone needs the traditional two times a week, and we pride ourselves in working with our patient’s schedules.

Q: I've tried physical therapy before and it didn't work, how is this place different?

A: This is something we unfortunately hear very often. While physical therapy is very helpful, chronic pain can be tricky. Traditional physical therapy treatments often only partially work on patients with chronic pain. Unlike other therapy centers, we specialize in treating chronic pain. We use hands-on treatment techniques to help alleviate pain. The "no pain no gain" motto doesn't apply. Instead of pushing things to the limit, our goals are focused on giving the patient control of their pain and teaching strategies to improve the pain, minimize flare ups and improve the body's functional endurance.