



Pediatric and School Based Physical Therapy

Summary

1. What is it?
2. Screening/Evaluation Process
3. Treatment



What is School Based Physical Therapy?

In general, physical therapists help injured or ill people improve movement and manage pain. They are often an important part of preventive care, rehabilitation, and treatment for patients with chronic conditions, illnesses, or injuries. However, this is different in a school-based setting, a school based physical therapist is a member of the provider team that helps to support a student's abilities to participate in the school environment. Their goal is to focus on gross motor movements and the larger muscles of the body. Specifically in the school-based setting they assist to improve a student's physical participation and safety with school based activities in the classroom and with their peers.

Screening and Evaluation Process

1. Physical Therapy Screen

The purpose of a physical therapy screen is to determine if a full evaluation is needed

- A request for a screen can be given by a parent, a teacher, or another provider if there is a concern about gross motor development
- A physical therapy screen consists of observation of general gross motor skills that should be developed based on the students age range, including:
 - Galloping, skipping, running, jumping
 - Single leg balancing, hopping
 - Stairs, hallway walking, getting onto and off of the floor
 - Throwing, catching, kicking
 - Strength: pushups, sit ups, prone extension

2. Physical Therapy Evaluation

The purpose of a physical therapy evaluation is to compare a student's gross motor skills to their peers based on a variety of different subtests. A parent or guardian must sign consent for an evaluation and a signed script is needed from the student's doctor

before the evaluation can be completed. There are different types of tests that can be used based on the students' age range. The one that is most used is the Bruininks-Oseretsky Test of Motor Proficiency (BOT-2) which looks at the gross motor areas of bilateral coordination, balance, strength, and running speed and agility.

- Each subtest has different activities that the student must perform, based on this they score a raw score which is then compared to their peers to determine an age range and descriptive category which is used to determine if services are required
- Following the completion of an evaluation a meeting will be held with teachers, parents, and service providers to discuss the results and determine if services are needed

Treatment

A child does not need to have a disability to qualify for school based physical therapy services, it can be recommended and given for any deficit that can affect a student in the school-based setting

Common deficits in a school setting include:

- Balance difficulties which increases fall risk
- Decreased body awareness leading to impulsivity and safety concerns
- Difficulty with stair negotiation
- Decreased core strength which effects prolonged sitting at a desk
- Difficulty with ball skills which can affect interactive game play with peers