

Restoring Maximum Function.

Physiatrists treat conditions of the bones, muscles, joints, brain and nervous system, which can affect other systems of the body and limit a person's ability to function. Here are some examples of how physiatrists restore maximum function.

A 38-year-old man who has played racket sports all his adult life suddenly develops back pain that keeps him awake at night. After X-rays rule out a spine problem, his physiatrist prescribes medications to reduce inflammation of the affected back tissues. Together, the doctor and patient develop a treatment plan, including strengthening exercises, massage therapy and, if needed, therapeutic injections.

A 56-year-old man has a stroke, leaving him temporarily unable to work and depressed. His physiatrist designs a comprehensive rehabilitation program, working with a neurologist to evaluate the brain's adjustment to the stroke, an occupational therapist to work on regaining motor skills, and a psychologist to help the man cope with his depression.

A 67-year-old woman has a knee replacement due to arthritis. Gait analysis shows she's putting extra weight on her right leg to compensate for the loss of strength in her left knee. Her physiatrist recommends aqua-aerobics to increase strength without impact on her knees, helps her set realistic recovery goals and, if at all possible, avoid additional surgery.

To locate a physiatrist in your area or to learn more about physical medicine and rehabilitation, visit www.aapmr.org. Your primary care physician can also refer you to a specialist.

American Academy
of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
AAPM&R
One IBM Plaza
Suite 2500
Chicago, Illinois 60611-3604
(312) 464-9700



Physiatry is a specialty of medicine recognized since 1947 by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

When you need a medical doctor who:

- is an expert at diagnosing and treating pain
- restores maximum function lost through injury, illness or disabling conditions
- treats the whole person and not just the symptoms
- leads a team of medical professionals
- provides non-surgical treatments

See a Physiatrist.

A **Physiatrist** treats:

- Back pain
- Sports injury
- Workplace injury
- Stroke rehabilitation
- Spinal cord injury
- Chronic pain
- Brain injury
- Neck pain
- Arthritis
- Cerebral palsy
- Multiple sclerosis
- Disabling conditions
- Carpal tunnel syndrome

And more.

A physiatrist is a doctor who treats medical conditions that can cause pain or limit function. Also called physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) physicians, physiatrists provide a full spectrum of care – from diagnosis to treatment and rehabilitation – to restore maximum health and quality of life.

Making a diagnosis. Physiatrists see patients of all ages experiencing a wide range of problems – from sore shoulders to muscle weakness – that may make it difficult to function at home, in the workplace or during recreational activities. Successful treatment of these symptoms requires accurate diagnosis. As specialists, physiatrists use techniques ranging from detailed medical histories to nerve conduction studies to diagnose a multitude of medical conditions.

Treating the whole person.

Physiatrists treat people, not just symptoms. By evaluating the impact of a condition on the *whole person* – medically, socially, emotionally and vocationally – physiatrists help their patients understand and take control of their health.

Coordinating care. Physiatrists listen to their patients and work with them to develop a customized course of treatment. This may include one or several non-surgical treatments, such as:

- medications
- therapeutic exercise
- injections
- assistive devices, such as a brace or artificial limb
- heat and cold therapy
- massage
- biofeedback and electrotherapies

If surgery *is* necessary, physiatrists work with patients and their surgeons beforehand, and coordinate their care afterward. Physiatrists help patients achieve a successful recovery by working with other physicians, such as neurologists and orthopaedic surgeons, and health professionals, like physical and occupational therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists.