



Physical Therapy Board of California

BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY - GOVERNOR EDMUND G. BROWN JR.

## Physical Therapy Board of California

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## STAPLE & SUTURE REMOVAL

*Is staple removal within the scope of practice of a physical therapist?*

The subject of staple removal was considered by the Practice Issues Committee of the Physical Therapy Board of California (Board) at their meeting of August 1995. The Practice Issues Committee opined that physical therapists may not perform invasive procedures; specifically in this instance, that of stapling a wound closed.

The removal of staples, on the other hand, is a non-invasive procedure, which would ordinarily come under the heading of nursing services, and is not normally associated with the practice of physical therapy; however, physical therapists may provide any non-invasive physical rehabilitation procedure they have been adequately trained to perform. Should a facility elect to train physical therapists to do staple removal, the facility would need a written protocol to be included in their policies and procedures manual, and to be used in the training of each physical therapist who will perform this procedure.

The training protocol must be sufficient to ensure the facility's patients that the procedure is being done in a safe and efficient manner by personnel who are trained specifically to remove staples. The training should also include procedures for problem situations resulting from staple removal, and for notification of proper medical personnel.

The Board has received multiple inquiries as to whether suture removal would be considered a non-invasive procedure such as staple removal. After consulting with a physical therapist expert consultant, it has been determined that the removal of sutures would fall under the same category as the removal of staples as indicated above.

Note: This document is not a declaratory opinion of the Physical Therapy Board of California.