

If you as a patient/client feel uncomfortable with your PT's/PTA's actions, explanation, comments, or treatment, stop the treatment. You have the right to say, "No, I don't feel comfortable and would like to stop this treatment." Trust your gut. If you have a bad feeling or are uncomfortable, say something.



WHAT IS SEXUAL MISCONDUCT?

This is conduct that exploits the physical therapist (PT)/physical therapist assistant (PTA) and patient/client relationship in a sexual way, whether verbal or physical, and may include the expression of thoughts, feelings, or gestures that are sexually based or could reasonably be construed by a patient/client as sexual. All PTs/PTAs are trained and educated to know this kind of behavior is illegal and unethical.

PTs and PTAs are trusted and respected by their patients/clients. However, a PT/PTA who accepts or encourages the expression of these feelings through sexual behaviors, or tells a patient/client that sexual involvement is part of physical therapy, violates the therapeutic relationship. This abusive behavior can cause harmful, long-lasting psychological effects to the patient/client.



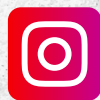
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SEXUAL BOUNDARIES IN PHYSICAL THERAPY: FOR PATIENTS/CLIENTS



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WHAT CAN I EXPECT IN A PT SESSION?

- You should be treated with respect and dignity and have your questions answered.
- The physical therapist should explain therapy procedures to you before they happen and get your INFORMED CONSENT.
- You should have privacy and appropriate coverage with a gown or drape if the exam requires exposed areas.
- You have the right to ask for a chaperone during physical therapy if it involves a sensitive area for evaluation/treatment.

WHAT IS INFORMED CONSENT?

- PTs/PTAs should clearly explain what will happen during the session, obtain your consent to proceed before beginning, and confirm ongoing consent during treatment sessions.
- You have the right to decline a procedure or stop, refuse, or withdraw from physical therapy services at any time.



WHAT IS NOT OK DURING PHYSICAL THERAPY?

- The PT/PTA not explaining what procedures they will do and why.
- Unwanted physical contact/inappropriate touching/advances.
- Being asked to expose areas of the body that are not part of the treatment.
- Exchanging sexual favors for treatment.
- Excessive out-of-session communication (social media, text, phone, etc.) not related to physical therapy.
- Telling sexual jokes or stories.
- Dating.
- Inviting a patient/client to lunch, dinner, or other social activity.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT?

- File a complaint to the appropriate licensing board via the respective state board's website.
- It may be difficult to file a complaint during an upsetting time, but filing a complaint is important for beginning an investigation into the PT/PTA and the surrounding circumstances.
- Your complaint will be investigated, and you will be notified of the findings.
- Licensing boards serve to protect the health, safety, and welfare of consumers.
- In addition to filing a complaint with the licensing board, you may need to contact local law enforcement, depending on the circumstances.



- You can verify the status of the PT's/PTA's license and complaint history on the licensing board's website. Use this QR code for links to licensing boards:



RESOURCES

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

Home of the National Advocacy Leadership Center, which provides training, development, and resources to connect with victim advocates or become an advocate.

<https://www.trynova.org/nalc/overview/>

US Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women (OVW)

Offers resources and programs throughout the US:

<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/local-resources>