

## **FREE Report: “Do You Make These 7 Mistakes When Choosing Your Physiotherapist?”**

Do you need physiotherapy treatment? If so, we (the practitioners at BodyFit) believe there are a few things you must know about that will help to make your experience safer, more effective and less stressful. Arming yourself with this knowledge will also help you to make more informed decisions, and discover exactly what you are entitled to.

Choosing the right health provider can be one of the most critical decisions you make when it comes to recovering from an injury. You also need to know what to expect from your physiotherapy provider during the course of your treatment.

This report gives you an industry insider’s look at 7 areas you should pay special attention to. We believe that being more informed about these crucial areas will help you to tell whether you’re really receiving the care you should be getting. Sometimes patients suspect that they’re not getting the best treatment, but they carry on with the same provider because they don’t know what to expect.

So please don’t make a mistake of ignoring these 7 areas and read on as we reveal the secrets of getting the top physiotherapy service you most certainly deserve.

We wrote this report to give you the tools to easily tell whether your provider is delivering the service you are entitled to. At the end of the day, you want to get the best of what is currently available in physiotherapy. Just be aware that the information in this report is merely our opinions, which may differ from other physiotherapists’ opinions if you asked them these same questions.

## 1. Does your physiotherapist have an Annual Practicing Certificate?

This is the first and most important question you need to ask. The Annual Practicing Certificate (APC) serves as evidence that a physiotherapist is qualified by the New Zealand Physiotherapy Board to practice physiotherapy in this country. The New Zealand Physiotherapy Board maintains a register of physiotherapists practicing in New Zealand. It also sets the standards of competence that ensure a physiotherapist is up-to-date with their knowledge and clinical skills.

***IMPORTANT: It is illegal for people who do not currently hold an APC to perform physiotherapy treatment!***

I occasionally hear someone say: “Oh, my uncle is a physio too”. However, after being questioned, they admit that “the uncle” has read some books on natural healing and likes to give people therapeutic massage with the best of intentions. He does not, however, have a recognised university degree in physiotherapy.

Clearly, you want to make sure that any physiotherapist who treats your injury is a fully qualified professional. So don't be shy about asking to see the Annual Practicing Certificate next time you see your physiotherapist.

## 2. When was the last time they did a professional skills update course?

This kind of course can be in any area a physiotherapist is interested in that relates to the practice of physiotherapy. The main objective of these courses is to keep the physiotherapist's knowledge up-to-date and relevant.

In a world of constant change, it is crucial for physiotherapists (and most other health professionals) to keep themselves up-to-date with the latest developments in healthcare. At the end of the day, you want to get the best of what is *currently* available, not what was available 20 years ago.

### 3. What is covered by ACC?

ACC (the Accident Compensation Corporation) was established to provide cover for injuries involving sudden accidents. This includes compensation for lost income and contribution towards the cost of medical treatment, as well as physiotherapy.

Since ACC only covers part of any treatment cost, you will usually need to pay a surcharge.

This charge may vary between different clinics, and depend on several factors including:

- the experience and post-graduate education of the physiotherapists in the practice
- length of treatment
- geographical location
- other services offered as part of the treatment (such as gym-based rehab, Posture Pro examination, or acupuncture)
- whether the physiotherapist specialises in a certain area.

You don't need to see your GP to register your ACC claim before you start physiotherapy treatment. You can fill out all of your ACC-related paperwork during your first consultation.

Note that ACC usually has a maximum number of treatments that they are happy to cover, and this number depends on the type of injury. For example, for a back injury they usually cover 12 physiotherapy sessions.

If you run out of these funded sessions, you have two options. You can ask your physiotherapist to apply for a treatment extension (known as an ACC32), or continue on as a private patient without ACC subsidising your treatment.

#### **4. How long does it take to fix an injury with physiotherapy treatment?**

This will vary from injury to injury. The length of time and number of sessions it will take to recover depends largely on the nature and severity of the injury. Therefore, it varies hugely between different conditions. An episode of back pain can take anything from days to months or even years, depending on the exact cause of the pain.

Your physiotherapist should give you an approximate indication of how long they think it will take to fully resolve your pain. However, it is usually impossible to give you an exact number of days. The human body can be unpredictable, and individual healing rates can vary. Still, your treatment plan should include an estimate of expected recovery period.

#### **5. What should you expect from your first physiotherapy treatment?**

A good physiotherapist will explain to you exactly what to expect from your treatment programme up front. However, most programmes loosely follow the process below.

1. During your first physiotherapy appointment, your physio should examine you thoroughly to determine the nature and severity of your problem. They will usually start by asking you a few questions.
2. After these questions, a physical examination usually takes place. During this, the physiotherapist will ask you to move the injured body part, test its strength, and do other useful tests to help them make a correct diagnosis. They should always then discuss their findings with you, so you can participate in the decision making process.
3. After explaining their findings to you, the physiotherapist should ask about the goals you would like to achieve. For example, if you were a runner, your goal might be something like “being able to run for 40 minutes pain-free”. From there, they should help you to work out a plan of action for how to achieve your goals. This is very important, because it clearly outlines:
  - what will happen during your treatment programme

- what you will achieve at the end of it
  - what you will then be able to do.
4. You'll probably also receive some treatment to kick-start your recovery process. This might involve a combination of
- hands-on manual therapy
  - some form of soft tissue massage
  - education about correct posture and lifting technique
  - physical rehabilitation exercises

IMPORTANT NOTE: The physiotherapist should always get your permission before starting any treatment. Remember that you can always say no to any treatment method you feel uncomfortable with.

## 6. Can I change my physiotherapist if I am not happy with them?

**Absolutely yes!** As a patient, you have a full right to choose whether to have any treatment, and who will deliver that treatment. You can change health providers at any stage during your rehabilitation or treatment programme. The physiotherapist who takes over should be able to arrange for all your notes to be transferred to their clinic so they can see your history.

Changing providers is not usually a problem if you are covered by ACC either. ACC generally won't mind if you change physiotherapists after a few treatment sessions, as long as you still have funded sessions left. Even if you run out, your new physiotherapist can apply for an ACC32. If this is approved, you can continue to have your ACC-funded treatment with the new physiotherapist.

## 7. Can I have my family present during the treatment?

Again, yes. Most physiotherapists encourage you to have your family in the treatment room to support you as long as you are happy with that. Often it can be very useful to have a family member present. This is especially true if there are language difficulties, since your family member may be able to help interpret.

We hope that this report will make you feel more confident about choosing your health provider. We also hope it will help you get the care you deserve every time you need physiotherapy, and make you more aware of what to look out for during treatment.

We believe that you, as a patient, should always get the highest level of care; and that you need to be able to tell when this isn't happening.

Finally, to check your legal rights, we recommend you refer to the Code of Rights as set out in the **The HDC Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights Regulation**. [http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights/the-code-\(full\)](http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights/the-code-(full))

If you have any questions about any of the information in this report, or would like to discuss anything in it further, please contact us on 09-5328942.