

If you as a patient/client feel uncomfortable with treatment, actions of the PT/PTA, the explanation you have received, or comments made, 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.

## RESOURCES

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)  
Home of the National Advocacy Leadership Center which provides training, development, and resources to become or connect with victim advocates  
<https://www.trynova.org/nalc/overview/>

U.S. Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women (OVW)  
Offers resources and programs throughout the US  
<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/local-resources>

### What is sexual misconduct?

This is conduct that exploits the physical therapist (PT)/physical therapist assistant (PTA)-patient 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.

PT 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 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.



## Sexual Boundaries in Physical Therapy:

### For Patients



## 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 **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?

- PT/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?

- 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 to do if you suspect inappropriate conduct

- It is difficult to file a complaint during an upsetting time for you, but filing a complaint is important in order to begin an investigation into the PT/ PTA and the surrounding circumstances.
- File a complaint to the appropriate licensing board via the respective state board's website.
- 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/ PTA's license and complaint history on the licensing board's website. Use this QR code for links to licensing boards:

