

# Physical Therapists and Electromyography (EMG)

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Safe.

Cost-Effective.

Accessible.

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Your constituents deserve safe, cost-effective, and easily accessible EMG services from qualified health care providers. Physical therapists have been safe providers of EMG services for **more than 35 years**—and should maintain that status.



American Physical Therapy Association<sup>SM</sup>  
*The Science of Healing. The Art of Caring.*

## What Is Electromyography?

Electromyography (EMG) is a way of recording and evaluating the electrical activity of a muscle. It is used to study the muscle's characteristics during relaxation and contraction by identifying whether electrical impulses are consistent with normal muscle activation. Data from EMG are used to identify muscle conditions that might be causing muscle weakness, including muscular dystrophy and disorders of the nervous system.

EMG is part of the physical therapist's scope of practice. Physicians routinely refer patients to physical therapists for EMG testing. The American Physical Therapy Association's (APTA) *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, a nationally accepted document describing the practice of physical therapy, states that EMG services, including nerve conduction velocity (NCV) testing, are used in the examination portion of physical therapists' patient management. In addition, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recognizes and reimburses EMG services when performed by licensed physical therapists who are board-certified in clinical electrophysiology by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties.

## Who Are Physical Therapists?

Physical therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who evaluate and treat people of all ages who have health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

PTs must have a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapist program before taking a state licensure examination. All physical therapists must be licensed by the state in which they practice. The minimum educational requirement is at least a master's degree, with a majority of educational programs now offering a doctor of physical therapy (DPT) degree. PTs are licensed in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Physical therapists practice in hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, rehabilitation facilities, skilled nursing facilities, homes, education or research centers, schools, hospices, corporate or industrial health centers, athletic facilities, and other settings.

# Why Physical Therapists?

## Physical therapists are qualified.

The professional education of the physical therapist supports the performance of electrophysiological testing such as EMG by extensive preparation in the foundational and clinical sciences of gross anatomy, neuroanatomy, muscle and nerve physiology, myology, neurology, and pathology.

In addition, licensed physical therapists can become board certified in clinical electrophysiology through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) by meeting rigorous requirements. These requirements include completing 2,000 hours of direct patient care in electrophysiology within the last 10 years, with 500 hours occurring within the last 3 years. Applicants for certification also must have performed a minimum of 500 complete electroneuromyography examinations during those hours. In order to achieve board-certification, applicants must successfully complete a rigorous examination administered for ABPTS through the National Board of Medical Examiners.

## Physical therapists are safe.

To date, *not one claim* citing EMG performed by physical therapists as the cause of injury has been reported by an insurer. Furthermore, there have been *no complaints* by patients nor incidents of malpractice on the part of physical therapists that would warrant eliminating PTs' ability to practice EMG.

## Physical therapist services are cost effective.

EMG services conducted by a physical therapist are recognized and reimbursed by all major third-party payers, including Medicare. In a 2004 study published in *Muscle and Nerve*, physical therapist services were found to be reimbursed at an average rate of \$84 for EMG services, whereas physicians were reimbursed \$500 for the same services. Ensuring that physical therapists may continue to provide EMG services in your state ensures competition and prevents a monopoly on EMG services by any one health care provider, a factor that would drive up health care costs.

## Physical therapists are accessible.

Because physical therapists work in a variety of settings, including rural areas, they are able to reach a large segment of the population. EMG testing conducted by physical therapists provides consumers and physicians with a freedom of choice for timely, competent testing.

## PTs & EMG—

**Preserve this vital health care service  
for your constituents, our patients.**

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national professional organization representing more than 66,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students. Its goal is to foster advancements in physical therapy practice, research, and education.

For more information about EMG and other state legislative issues, please contact APTA's Government Affairs Department at 1-800/999-8533 or via e-mail at [govtaffair@apta.org](mailto:govtaffair@apta.org)



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