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## **Physical Therapy: Maximize Your Ability**

By Julie Stevens-Hom, MPT, NCS

People with newly-diagnosed or longstanding MS are likely candidates for physical therapy. To obtain maximum benefit from physical therapy, it is important to find a therapist who specializes in neurological deficits and understands the scope of MS.

A physical therapist specializing in MS will develop a personalized treatment plan and goals, based on patients' strength, flexibility, balance, walking and mobility issues. For example, if one's goal is to walk better and prevent falls, the therapist will determine which specific muscles need strengthening and which muscles require more flexibility. A therapist also works with doctors to manage tone and spasticity using Botox and other medications.

A patient with MS may have other goals such as improving one's ability to stand up from a couch or other low surface, standing for longer periods of time, walking longer distances without fatigue, and walking with better knee control. A physical therapist breaks such activities into smaller achievable components and then rebuilds the process back up to the original tasks.

Physical therapy started early can prevent future complications and help individuals maintain or regain their independence. Speak with your physician to request a physical therapy referral to optimize your mobility and fitness.

*Julie Hom, MPT, NCS is the founder of Ability Rehabilitation Specialists in La Jolla, a neurologic and orthopedic therapy clinic. Ability Rehab specializes in the treatment of MS. Ability Rehab leads a free MS group class for balance deficits. To find out more call (858) 456-2114 or log on to [www.physicaltherapysandiego.com](http://www.physicaltherapysandiego.com).*