



# Physiotherapists supporting Manitobans with disabilities

By Karen Cooke

**M**ost people know someone in their life who is affected by a disability in some way. Whether this is an intellectual or physical disability, one acquired later in life or at birth, a common thread is that Physiotherapy can and should play an important role in helping individuals live, and live well, with a disability.

Because disability takes on many forms and presentations, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to Physiotherapy treatment. Rather, your Physiotherapist will work with you and your support network to create a treatment plan that focuses on individual goals, which may include promoting gross motor development in your infant or child, returning to a prior level of function, accessing your home and community environment, reducing pain, improving participation in leisure and recreation activities, or returning home following a hospital stay. Whatever the goal, improving quality of life is the fundamental backbone of Physiotherapy.

As trained professionals in rehabilitation, mobility equipment and accessibility, Physiotherapists are well-equipped to help you meet your goals as part of an interdisciplinary team. They may use their skills to determine and treat underlying causes of pain or limitations in movement and function, respiratory techniques to help with airway clearance or appropriate transfer/lift methods. Physiotherapists may also provide recommendations on gross motor development, individualized stretching/exercise programs, wheelchair and seating systems,

and other equipment such as positioning devices, orthotics, mobility equipment and mobility aids.

Physiotherapists in Manitoba treat individuals with disabilities in a variety of environments. You may see one in hospital upon an initial injury or diagnosis for early mobility, respiratory techniques, equipment and positioning. Physiotherapists may also be part of your rehabilitation journey either in an inpatient, outpatient clinic or home-based setting to improve mobility and independence and to maximize participation in the community. You may encounter Physiotherapists working in private homes, daycares, schools, adult day programs and workplaces delivering care to best support Manitobans with disabilities over the course of their lifetime. Physiotherapists can continue to play a role in your health over the long term, in order to prevent secondary complications of disability and encourage lifelong activity and participation.

In Manitoba, individuals with an intellectual or physical disability have access to Physiotherapy services through a variety of means and may be covered through both Manitoba Health and private insurance. Services may be accessed through self-referral or by referral from a physician or social worker. If you have not yet been connected with a Physiotherapist, or perhaps have gone a few years without seeing one, visit [www.mbphysio.org](http://www.mbphysio.org) to find a Physiotherapist near you.

*Karen Cooke is a Physiotherapist at St. Amant Center.*

YOUR PHYSIOTHERAPIST HAS THE ABILITY TO USE A BROAD RANGE OF TREATMENT TECHNIQUES TO HELP YOU GET BETTER.



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