

New APTA Survey Reveals Disconnect Between Americans' Long-Term Health Goals and How They Address Movement

Nearly 9 in 10 Americans May Be Missing a Key Tool to Protect Their Future Health

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA [Oct. 1, 2026] – Today, in recognition of National Physical Therapy Month, the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) released findings from a benchmark survey to better understand how people think about movement and their long-term health. The findings suggest that Americans view their health in silos, highlighting a gap in understanding how different aspects of health are connected. The survey is part of APTA's "PT For Future Me" consumer awareness campaign, which encourages people of every age and ability to view physical therapy not only as a resource for injury treatment and recovery, but as a proactive way to support long-term mobility and well-being.

This year's results reveal a striking disconnect: Americans want to protect their long-term health, yet many are overlooking a critical thread that connects pain, sleep, pelvic health, mobility, aging, and overall well-being: movement. Just 38% of Americans recognize that establishing healthy routines early in life is important for long-term health, and only 11% identify addressing physical or movement issues before they worsen as a top strategy for their future health. 'PT For Future Me' aims to shift that mindset by helping people see these concerns not as isolated issues, but as interconnected parts of their health.

"It's clear that people want to stay healthy and independent, but too often we think about symptoms like pain, disrupted sleep, muscle weakness, and mobility issues as separate issues. In reality, these issues can often be connected, and movement is critical to the solution," said APTA President Kyle Covington, PT, DPT, PhD. "When we treat these concerns in isolation, we can miss opportunities to address them before they become bigger barriers. "PT For Future Me" is about helping people see the bigger picture: movement connects many aspects of our health, and physical therapy can help people act earlier to keep doing the things that matter most throughout their lives."

Across a range of health concerns, Americans often wait until issues become disruptive or manage them on their own rather than seeking support early. Highlights from the survey include:

- **Managing Pain:** Physical therapy can help people manage pain and stay active, yet many Americans continue to manage discomfort on their own. While 83% have experienced at least one pain-related issue in the past year and 52% say it disrupts daily life or limits activities they enjoy, only 27% say they would work with a physical therapist to address it.
- **Sleep Disruptions:** Physical therapy can help address movement and physical factors that can contribute to sleep challenges, yet many Americans look for immediate relief when sleep issues arise. Americans are about twice as likely to ignore poor sleep or hope it resolves on its own (41%) as they are to seek help from a physical therapist (19%).
- **Digital Age:** Americans recognize that today's digital habits could have long-term consequences for mobility, but that concern doesn't necessarily translate into seeking support. 75% of adults worry that children's poor posture, excessive screen time, and lack of physical activity could affect their future

mobility and health. Meanwhile, use of physical therapists as a health resource remains relatively low and consistent across generations (14%–20%).

- **Pelvic Health Challenges:** Pelvic health concerns often go unaddressed, with many people managing symptoms on their own rather than seeking professional care. More than one-quarter of adults (27%) have experienced pelvic pain or physical discomfort that has affected intimate moments, yet only about half (57%) of those who experienced it sought help from a healthcare professional.

The "PT For Future Me" campaign equips people with the tools and information they need to make physical therapy part of a proactive health strategy. Resources include a comprehensive patient education toolkit covering the role of physical therapy across the lifespan, interactive materials to help people take charge of their health, and a "Find a PT" directory that helps people locate licensed physical therapists. People can visit a physical therapist directly without a physician referral in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. To learn more, visit ChoosePT.com.

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About the Survey

Between May 29 and June 2, 2026, APTA conducted a national survey of 1,000 nationally representative U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The survey has a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$.

About "PT For Future Me"

"PT For Future Me" is a new ChoosePT public awareness campaign that highlights physical therapy's role in enhancing movement and function in people of every age and ability, promoting resilience throughout the lifespan. It emphasizes prevention, wellness, and improving mobility and strength to support all aspects of work, life, and play. For more info, visit <http://www.choosept.com/future-me>.

About APTA

The American Physical Therapy Association represents 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students nationwide. Visit apta.org to learn more.

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