

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's Health and Wellness program, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and I have two guests today, Angie Conklin, our Rehab Therapies Director, and one of our physical therapists, Jess Price. Good morning ladies.

Angie Conklin: Good morning.

Jess Price: Good morning.

Katie Johnson: October is National Physical Therapy Month and we want to take some time to talk about how Physical Therapy can help people in our community and to give a shout out to our amazing team of PT's – about 17 members strong currently – of highly qualified professionals most of whom have their Doctor of Physical Therapy and who are very skilled at help people get back to the activities of life they enjoy after injury or illness. And that's what we want to talk about today, is when can PT help you, how do you get started with physical therapy, and what are some of the benefits of using PT instead of pain relief. So let's start with how you can know if physical therapy can help you with your problem? It doesn't always have to be that a doctor tell you "you need physical therapy," right?

Jess Price: No, you don't always need to have a doctor telling you that you need therapy. Maybe you think that you've gotten a little weaker or maybe your balance is a little bit off or maybe you've had a surgery and that's when they probably would refer you on a therapy. Other kinds of things that you might have therapy for, after having a stroke or maybe a brain injury. That kind of thing. Also, if you have poor posture, maybe you're getting some pain from that or any kind of pain in your joints that you're having or your back or your neck. We can certainly assist you with that.

Katie Johnson: It kind of sounds like I might need physical therapy. What are the common conditions that you treat?

Jess Price: I would say the most common are probably the orthopedic cases. Meaning you have knee pain or you have hip pain or shoulder pain. Those are pretty common, and also back pain is very, very common. As we get into her older population, it's more so balance and difficulty walking.

Katie Johnson: Sure. So tell me what a typical appointment in physical therapy would look like, how long would it take and what would it involve?

Jess Price: Sure. The first time you come is a little bit different than the rest of them because we need to get to know you and what's going on, so we have to kind of evaluate or assess the area of hurt of pain or the problem. So we kind of look at that, and we ask a whole bunch of questions, and get a little bit more detail, and then we kind of get into some hands-on testing to see how strong you are, or

check your flexibility and mobility, and then maybe we do some balance testing, if that's the case. And then from there, we kind of talk about what your goals are as a patient to see where you want to be at, at the end of therapy. And our overall goal is to get you set up on a home program so that you can kind of continue with that and be in charge of your own health and wellness.

Katie Johnson: So you mentioned at the end of therapy. Is there a typical length of time? Or how do you determine what recovery time is going to look like for therapy?

Jess Price: That's different for everyone, whether you had surgery or not. Those kind of play effect during how long or how severe your surgery maybe was, that can kind of play a factor. Some people, one or two visits is enough and some people might need 12 to 15 or even more for some people, depending on if they are having more difficulties attaining what they need, whether it be strength or function for being able to get in and out of a chair, up and down stairs kind of a thing.

Another is how consistent you are and how compliant you are with performing your homework per se that your therapist would give you.

Katie Johnson: That's kind of the hard part of therapy, isn't it? You can't just fix it as a physical therapist, you really rely on the patient or the client to do their part and invest their time and energy.

Jess Price: Correct. It's kind of a two-way street. We can't fix you, we'd like to fix you on our own, but you need to put forth effort to get better.

Katie Johnson: What are the main benefits you see when people really do apply themselves and the get the full benefit of physical therapy?

Jess Price: They feel better, first of all. They move better, maybe to have less pain, and they feel stronger, and they're able to do things that they maybe haven't been able to do for quite a while.

Katie Johnson: You know we hear a lot about the opioid crisis and about reliance on drugs to make us feel better. What's the relationship between physical therapy and its ability to maybe reduce the need for prescription pain relief?

Angie Conklin: Yeah. Being part of physical therapy, we work together with the doctor to try to do what we can to help you reduce your pain. That's over all part of it. So by working with PT, we can help with many mobility issues or joint issues that you were maybe having to take some pain medication for, that you didn't know we're available. There's things like dry needling, and different modalities that we can do with you to help with pain, to reduce that.

I just recently read a statistic from Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Dakota that was saying, if you work with physical therapy, they're finding a 30% reduction in

total healthcare cost and 80% decrease in patient out-of-pocket cost, and a 90% reduction in opioid use.

Katie Johnson: Wow.

Angie Conklin: And that's crazy, when you think of that.

Katie Johnson: It is. It's very promising when you think about it too though. We maybe just need a shift in our mindset a little bit about how we ... What options we have for addressing pain.

Angie Conklin: Definitely. If we could get everyone to think of physical therapy as more of a preventive part of it versus reactive. We want to be proactive with them. If they can come in to us and see us before the pain gets out of control. And even when they're noticing, "Oh, I'm having some issues with my back." Come and see us and see what we can do so that we don't even get this far down the road.

Katie Johnson: Talking about the different strategies like that, how might a physical therapy program differ for a patient who's post-surgery versus post-injury say?

Jess Price: With surgery, the surgeons have specific protocols that we like to follow and their guidelines that they want us to follow, just to protect and maybe appreciate the work that they did internally. So along with that, maybe we have a little bit more swelling and inflammation and maybe a different kind of pain to start out with, that most of us kind of forget that that's going to happen however, it does, but we need to certainly get on top of that and make sure that we are focusing on those first acute phases of that, of the healing, and then we continue to progress where maybe at that point we're getting more to the part where maybe they started to be a little bit similar with if you have surgery or not, where now we're looking at regaining your range of motion and regaining your strength and going from there.

Katie Johnson: It strikes me that physical therapist have to know a lot. Talk a little bit about what it takes to become a physical therapist and what kind of credentials our therapist have.

Jess Price: Well, schooling for the most part, most programs in the college are doctoral level programs. Meaning that most of them have you perform like a thesis kind of a thing. Once you get into a physical therapy program, it's typically three years of all year round, you have summer school as well, you learn about lots and lots of different things.

Angie Conklin: And then after that, you do a field work placement, where you actually learn hands on with your instructor in the field work. And the great thing about therapy in general is there's so much education and certificates you can get after. You can specialize in so many different areas.

You can be a generalist, you can specialize in orthopedic, sports medicine. There's all kinds of things, Parkinson's, pediatrics. And we have all that here at Lake Region. We have just cutting edge therapy here. We have 16 outpatient therapists and we certificates in many different areas. We have women's health and like mentioned, Parkinson's, vestibular, we're doing dry needling, we're doing blood flow restriction. These are things that people used to go out of the area for and we can do them right here in our town.

Katie Johnson: Plus you have options about where patients can get these services in town, both here at Lake Region Healthcare's Therapy Department and as of this winter we also offer PT services on site at the Fergus Falls YMCA -

Angie Conklin: We just feel really blessed that we have this partnership with the YMCA. It's going to be a great thing for the community. Our mission is to keep people healthy in our community and this just fits.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely. So if you're interested in learning more about the physical therapy services available at Lake Region Healthcare and or through Lake Region Healthcare at YMCA, we just really encourage you to give our physical therapy department a call and that number again.

Angie Conklin: 7368388.

Katie Johnson: Perfect. Jess Price, physical therapist, Angie Conklin, our rehab therapies director at Lake Region Healthcare, thank you so much for taking time to visit with us this morning.

Angie Conklin: Thank you.

Jess Price: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Jess Price, Angie Conklin and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day this morning celebrating National PT month and giving a big thank you to our team of Physical Therapists for the work they do to help people in our community return to the activities they love after illness or injury! And we do also remind you. there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.