

# Physiotherapist: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Physiotherapist: Alternative Careers

In BC, physiotherapists provide hands-on treatment and design exercise and other treatment plans to help patients with physical difficulties resulting from illness, injury, disability or ageing.

Physiotherapists practice in a range of public and private settings, including hospitals, private clinics, home care, child-development centres, extended care facilities, and health-planning agencies.

You may find that your international training and experience as a physiotherapist are not immediately accepted in B.C. The skills you have acquired as a physiotherapist (understanding of anatomy and pathology, communication, interpersonal and analytical skills, compassion and understanding) can be used in these alternative careers:

- rehabilitation assistant (NOC 3414)
- physiotherapy technician (NOC 3237)
- athletic therapist (NOC 3144)
- residential care worker / health care aide (NOC 3413)

## Alternative Careers:

### Rehabilitation Assistant (NOC 3414)

Also look for these job titles: *physiotherapy assistant, physical therapy assistant, therapy assistant*

You work under the direction of physiotherapists to reduce patients' pain and help them regain movement. You work in clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, retirement homes, physiotherapists' offices, and sometimes in private homes and fitness centres.

#### Duties include:

- administer treatments such as massages, hot or cold packs, and electrical stimulation
- monitor patients' responses and report to the physiotherapist
- teach exercises to patients, and help them walk or stand up
- prepare and maintain equipment and supplies
- routine office functions

#### Requirements:

- completion of a recognized Rehabilitation Assistant Program *or an equivalent combination of education, training and experience*

#### Skills:

- strong interpersonal and communication skills are essential; you must be patient and keep your clients motivated
- organizational and time management skills
- strength and stamina are also required

#### Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$20.00

Sources:

WorkBC <http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profilesinfo/3414>

Career Cruising database (Profile for "Physiotherapy Assistant")

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

## **Physiotherapy Technician (NOC 3237)**

*Also look for this job title: physical therapy technician*

You work under the direction of physiotherapists to provide treatment programs such as massage, thermotherapy and hydrotherapy to help injured, disabled or elderly individuals. You work in hospitals, clinics, extended care facilities, rehabilitation centres, and physiotherapy offices.

### **Duties include:**

- teach and assist patients to regain or maintain the ability to move about and care for themselves through exercise routines and other activities
- use a variety of equipment including wheel chairs, walking aids, mechanical lifts, exercise equipment and low voltage electrical equipment

### **Requirements:**

- may require two- to three-year college program in physical rehabilitation therapy
- may need to complete a period of supervised practical training

### **Skills:**

- strong interpersonal skills and able to communicate well with a variety of clients and other health-care professionals
- able to work independently, follow instructions, have good organizational and critical thinking skills
- physical stamina since you use your arms and hands for therapy and stand for long periods of time

### **Wages:**

- median hourly wage \$22.50

Source:

WorkBC <https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers/Browse-Career-Profile/3237>

### **Athletic Therapist (NOC 3144)**

*Also look for the job title: athletic trainer*

You help athletes maintain their physical health by teaching them how to avoid injuries, as well as by treating injuries. You may work for sports teams or work in hospitals, doctors' offices, universities, fitness centres, and sports medicine facilities.

#### **Duties include:**

- teach athletes how to prevent injuries through stretching and exercise
- assess and treat athletes' injuries
- refer injured athletes to doctors if needed
- develop training programs for players recovering from injury
- provide players with tensor bandages, braces, and other equipment

#### **Requirements:**

- a relevant post-secondary degree, e.g. athletic therapy, kinesiology, exercise science, or physical education

#### **Skills:**

- manual dexterity and physical stamina
- strong communication and problem solving skills
- strong interest in sports

#### **Wages:**

- median hourly wage: \$23.44

Sources:

WorkBC <http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3144>

Career Cruising database (Profile for "Athletic Therapist")  
<http://www.vpl.ca/digitalc-library/career-cruising>

### **Residential Care Worker / Health Care Aide (NOC 3413)**

*Also referred to as hospital aide, patient care aide, nursing aide, orderly, patient service associate*

You assist nurses, hospital staff and physicians in the basic care of patients. You work in hospital wards or residential long-term care facilities.

#### **Duties include:**

- assist patients in daily activities such as bathing, dressing and grooming, and eating
- take basic measurements such as blood pressure, temperature and pulse
- observe and monitor patients and report changes to supervisor
- transport patients by wheelchair or stretcher for treatment or surgery
- make beds and maintain patients' rooms

#### **Requirements:**

- secondary school education, criminal record check, tuberculosis screening

#### **Skills:**

- physical stamina
- strong interpersonal skills
- sensitivity and patience to create a comfortable environment for patients
- excellent observational skills
- ability to carefully follow direction, policy and procedure

#### **Wages:**

- median hourly wage \$20.90

Source:

WorkBC <http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/3413>

## 2. Employment Outlook

Employment in the health care industry is generally stable and not affected by changes in the economy.

BC's growing population is increasing demand for health care services. The aging population is also increasing demand, because as people age, they are more likely to require health care.

### Rehabilitation Assistant

#### Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 3414)

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| % of job openings from replacement                   | 55%   |
| % of job openings from expansion                     | 45%   |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 1.9%  |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)         | 1,990 |

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>

### Physiotherapy Technician

#### Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 3237)

|  |      |
|--|------|
| % of job openings from replacement                   | 60%  |
| % of job openings from expansion                     | 40%  |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 1.9% |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)         | 220  |

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>

## Athletic Therapists

### Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 3144)

|  |      |
|--|------|
| % of job openings from replacement                   | 50%  |
| % of job openings from expansion                     | 50%  |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 2.1% |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)         | 630  |

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>

## Residential Care Worker / Health Care aide

### Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 3413)

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| % of job openings from replacement                   | 55%    |
| % of job openings from expansion                     | 45%    |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 2.2%   |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)         | 16,620 |

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/>



### 3. Retraining

You may want to consider upgrading your skills to increase your employment options in this field. The following courses may improve your current skill set:

#### **Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Open Learning: *Medical English***

This online course provides an opportunity to develop your understanding of medical terminology as it is used in Canadian health care. Internationally educated health care providers acquire career-specific language development.

Thirty week program, web-based instruction

<http://www.tru.ca/distance/courses/hlth1061.html>

#### **Rehabilitation Assistant / Occupational & Physical Therapist Assistant / Therapist Assistant Diploma Programs**

Programs covering physiotherapy and occupational therapy range from four to five semesters (up to two years); they require full time attendance and practicum placements.

- **Capilano University**, Rehabilitation Assistant Diploma  
<http://www.capilanou.ca/radp/>
- **Okanagan College**, Therapist Assistant Diploma  
[http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Programs/Areas\\_of\\_Study/health/therapist-assistant/](http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Programs/Areas_of_Study/health/therapist-assistant/)
- **Vancouver Community College**, Occupational/Physical Therapist Assistant  
<http://www.vcc.ca/programscourses/program-areas/health-sciences/occupationalphysical-therapist-assistant-rehab-assistant/>

## 4. Searching for Jobs:

### BC Government Job Postings

<https://search.employment.gov.bc.ca/>

British Columbia public services employment opportunities

### B.C. Health Authorities

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/> (select link for each region and then go to 'Careers')

Regional services including publicly funded hospitals and residential care facilities

### B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority Job Postings

<http://jobs.phsa.ca/>

Lists jobs available in specialty institutions such as BC Transplant, Women's Hospital, BC Children's Hospital

### Health Match BC

<http://www.healthmatchbc.org/Allied-Health/Physiotherapists.aspx>

Health Match BC is a free health professional recruitment service funded by the Government of British Columbia

### Physiotherapy Association of British Columbia (PABC)

<http://www.bcphysio.org/jobs>

### Providence Health Care

<http://www.providencehealthcare.org/careers>

### Indeed.ca

<http://www.indeed.ca>

### Privately funded residential care facilities

<http://www.bcsla.ca/>

## 5. Volunteering in the Field

*Volunteering* can help you to explore new careers and learn more about the health care system in BC. You will meet new people and build a network of contacts that can lead to information on job openings and inside connections with potential employers.

The following organizations accept volunteers in hospitals, residential care facilities, adult day centres, palliative care and other community settings.

### Canadian Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.ca/in-your-community/british-columbia-and-yukon/british-columbia-and-yukon-volunteer-opportunities>

### Fraser Health Authority

<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/about-us/volunteer/>

### Providence Health Care

<http://www.providencehealthcare.org/volunteers>

### Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

<http://www.vch.ca/get-involved/volunteer/> including these rehabilitation centres:

- G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre
- Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children.

<http://www.bcchildrens.ca/Services/SunnyHillHealthCtr/AboutUs/Volunteer.htm>

### Volunteer BC

[www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/](http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/)

### Community Care Facilities, BC Ministry of Health

Other volunteer opportunities may be available from individual care facilities in BC:

- <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/survey/index.php/displaycommunity/index>

**NOTE:** *volunteering for local sports events or teams* can introduce you to people in the local sports market and provide you with useful contacts.

Consider these types of opportunities:

- **races/marathons** <http://runguides.com/Vancouver/runs>
  - Vancouver SunRun: <http://www.vancouver.sun.com/sunrun/event/news.html>
  - Vancouver Marathon: <http://www.bmovanmarathon.ca/volunteer/>
- **local secondary school athletic programs**  
contact your local school district: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools>
- **amateur sports:** <http://sportbc.com/get-involved/all-sports/>

## 6. Helpful Resources

### Physiotherapy Association of British Columbia (PABC)

<http://bcphysio.org/faq/careers-physiotherapist-assistants>

### College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia (CPTBC)

<http://cptbc.org/>

### National Physiotherapist Assistant Assembly

<http://www.physiotherapy.ca/Physiotherapy-Assistants?lang=en-ca>

Click on 'Job Search Resources at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca> for help on:

- resumes & cover letters
- getting Canadian work experience
- networking for employment
- online social networks
- Canadian workplace culture

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.