

How physiotherapists help meet the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards



Physiotherapists are highly skilled in assessing, diagnosing and treating many age-related conditions and symptoms. They assist older people to regain function and perform meaningful tasks, improve quality of life and support human rights with evidence-based care planning and interventions.

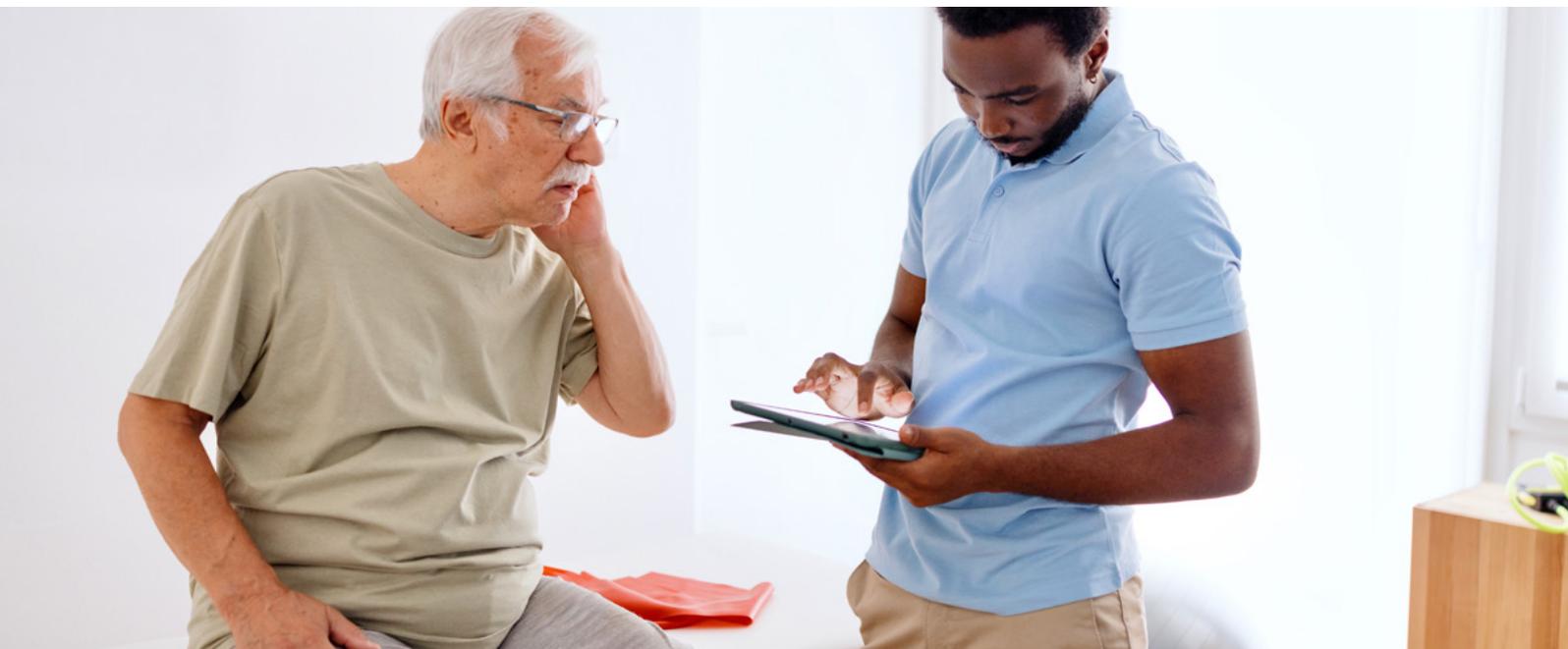
The broad scope of physiotherapy includes addressing:

Balance and mobility issues that increase risk of falls and injury 	Chronic pain 	Arthritis 	Surgical pre- and rehabilitation 	Respiratory issues 
Dementia, stroke and Parkinson's Disease 	Factors impacting strength, balance and endurance 	Incontinence 	Dizziness 	Sleep disturbances 

Physiotherapists also prescribe assistive technology to support older people in maintaining movement, function and independence.

They have a critical role in manual handling, pressure injury prevention and treatment and positioning for safe swallowing, and are central to multidisciplinary care in residential and home settings.

This fact sheet outlines how the unique breadth of physiotherapy's clinical, diagnostic and person-centred expertise helps meet the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards.



Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

Physiotherapists are integral to meeting the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards by supporting person-centred care, safety, clinical governance and quality improvement. Their expertise in mobility, function, pain management and staff training directly addresses many of the new requirements and outcomes expected of aged care providers.



Standard 1: Person-centred care

- Physiotherapists help tailor care to each individual's needs, goals and preferences, respecting their identity, culture and diversity.
- They support independence, choice and quality of life by enabling older people to maintain or regain mobility and function.
- By fostering inclusion and supporting social connections through group exercise or mobility programs, physiotherapists help address the holistic needs of residents.



Standard 2: Organisational governance and workforce

- Physiotherapists play a leadership role in clinical care, functional improvement and the prevention of functional decline.
- They train staff in manual handling and injury prevention, supporting both staff and client safety.
- Physiotherapists can inform the governing body about clinical care services that enhance quality and safety, and may lead multidisciplinary team care.
- Their expertise is valuable in risk management, incident prevention and continuous improvement processes.



Standard 3: Care and services

- Physiotherapists are central to assessment and planning, especially for mobility, pain, falls risk and functional capacity.
- They develop and review care plans, monitor changes in client status (mobility, strength, balance, continence) and support reablement and maintenance of function.
- Physiotherapists facilitate safe mobilisation, provide postural support and ensure safe use of equipment and aids.
- They contribute to communication and coordination among care teams, ensuring continuity and quality of care.



Standard 4: Safe environment and infection control

- Physiotherapists assess environmental risks in both home and facility settings, advising on safe movement and equipment use.
- They support infection prevention by training staff in safe handling and hygiene practices during therapy sessions.



Standard 5: Clinical care

- Physiotherapists are skilled at identifying changes in cognition, mobility and function and can escalate concerns to the broader care team.
- They provide goal-directed, person-centred care to assist with pain management, pressure injury prevention, continence care and safe swallowing (positioning for eating and drinking).
- Physiotherapists play a role in palliative and end-of-life care, supporting comfort, mobility and quality of life.
- They contribute to falls prevention, rehabilitation after events like stroke and management of chronic conditions like Parkinson's disease.



Standard 6: Food and nutrition

- By keeping people mobile and managing pain, physiotherapists enable residents to access dining areas, maintain posture and participate in enjoyable dining experiences.
- They assist with positioning and postural support strategies that facilitate safe eating and drinking.



Standard 7: Residential community

- Physiotherapists help residents engage in meaningful activities, maintain relationships and participate in community life by optimising mobility, strength and balance.
- They support transitions (eg, hospital to home), ensuring continuity of care and access to specialised clinical services.

Further qualified roles

Physiotherapists may provide or facilitate access specific services (eg, vestibular or pelvic health) when required.

They are also involved in training and supporting staff to ensure safe mobilisation and people handling.



Assistive technology prescription

Physiotherapists assess functional needs to determine the type of equipment that will best meet a client's goals.

They match the individual's physical abilities with the correct assistive technology support, which may include:

- mobility aids (walking frames, crutches, canes, wheelchairs, transfer aids)
- home and daily living equipment (grab rails, bed mobility aids, seating supports, pressure-relieving cushions/mattresses)
- transfer aids and hoists
- exercise and rehabilitation technology (Therabands, splints, braces, telehealth or digital monitoring devices)
- falls prevention equipment (hip protectors, non-slip footwear, some environmental modifications recommendations)
- customisation and fitting of equipment
- education and training
- monitoring and reassessment
- support for funding applications
- collaboration with other professionals.

Physiotherapy is evidence-based

There is robust evidence—from systematic reviews, national surveys and clinical studies—that physiotherapists improve outcomes directly aligned with the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards.

Australian policy and professional bodies explicitly endorse the role of physiotherapists in meeting these standards.

Practical examples and case studies are available in APA resources, demonstrating real-world impact.

1. Australian and international research evidence

a. Systematic reviews and national surveys

Systematic reviews confirm that physiotherapy in aged care improves functional ability, prevents falls and reduces pain for older adults in residential settings. However, the scope and utilisation of physiotherapy are often limited by funding and policy, not by lack of evidence or skill.

A **2022 national survey** of Australian physiotherapists in residential aged care found that, when enabled, physiotherapists deliver high-value, evidence-based care that supports reablement, independence and quality of life. The study calls for policy to better utilise physiotherapists' expertise to meet the needs of older adults and the requirements of the strengthened standards.

b. Clinical outcomes

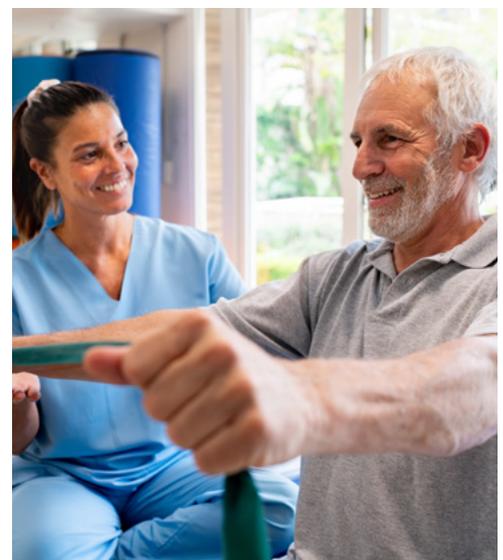
Physiotherapy interventions have been shown to significantly improve pain, mobility and functional independence in older adults with chronic diseases. The frequency and duration of physiotherapy sessions are positively correlated with better outcomes.

Targeted programs (eg, exercise, mobility, balance training) in residential aged care maintain or improve walking speed, strength and balance—even in frail older adults. These improvements directly support the goals of the strengthened standards in relation to independence, falls prevention and quality of life.

c. Multidisciplinary and person-centred care

Reviews highlight the importance of physiotherapists as part of multidisciplinary teams, contributing to assessment, care planning and reablement approaches that are central to the new standards.

Evidence supports physiotherapists' roles in pain management, pressure injury prevention, continence care and safe mobilisation—all key to meeting clinical and environmental standards.



2. Australian policy and professional guidance

The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission both recognise physiotherapists as essential to delivering safe, high-quality, person-centred care in line with the strengthened standards. APA fact sheets and advocacy documents cite research and case studies demonstrating physiotherapy's impact on mobility, falls prevention, pain management and reablement.

Accreditation and regulatory frameworks (eg, Ahpra and the Australian Physiotherapy Council) ensure that physiotherapists are trained and credentialed to deliver evidence-based care, supporting safe practice and continuous quality improvement.



3. APA resources

The APA has mapped evidence and practical examples of how physiotherapists address each standard, including:

- providing holistic assessments and person-centred care
- enabling choice, independence and dignity of risk
- supporting palliative care, pain management and functional goals
- training staff in manual handling and injury prevention
- leading or contributing to multidisciplinary care planning.



References:

- [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Falls Guidelines for Residential Aged Care](#)
- [BMC Geriatrics: Under-utilisation of physiotherapy in Australian RACFs](#)
- [PLOS One: Systematic review of physiotherapy in nursing homes](#)
- [Frontiers in Public Health: Impact of physiotherapy on health outcomes](#)
- [Joint APA/Dementia Australia Position Statement on Physiotherapy and Dementia](#)
- [Australian Physiotherapy Association Position Statement on Falls Prevention](#)
- [APA Fact Sheet: Physiotherapy in aged care reform and skills](#)
- [APA Fact Sheet: Physiotherapy in Aged Care](#)
- [APA Fact Sheet: Physiotherapy in Pain Management](#)
- [APA Fact Sheet: Physiotherapy in Stroke Management](#)
- [APA Fact Sheet: Value of manual therapy in physiotherapy](#)
- [APA Fact Sheet: Five ways physiotherapy keeps people out of hospitals](#)