

Today, you may be seeing a physician assistant. Physician assistants provide high-quality health care services to patients and the community. We hope this brochure will answer any questions you may have. If you have further questions, ask the supervising physician.



What is a Physician Assistant?

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A physician assistant, or PA, is a licensed and highly skilled health care professional. Physician assistants are academically and clinically prepared to provide health care services with the direction and responsible supervision of a doctor of medicine or osteopathy. Within the physician-PA relationship, PAs make clinical decisions and provide a broad range of diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive, and health maintenance services.



Physician Assistant Board

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What are the training requirements to become a physician assistant (PA)?

A PA must attend and graduate from an accredited physician assistant program associated with a medical school that includes classroom studies and clinical experience. The professional curriculum for PA education includes basic medical, behavioral, and social sciences; introduction to clinical medicine and patient assessment; supervised clinical practice; and health policy and professional practice issues.

Is a PA licensed by the state of California?

Yes. To practice in California, a PA must graduate from an accredited PA program and pass a national examination before being licensed by the Physician Assistant Board, which is overseen by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

What additional duties does the Physician Assistant Board perform?

The Physician Assistant Board facilitates and encourages physician assistant service by advocating and enforcing regulations necessary to licensing, monitoring, and expanding the physician assistant practice. The Physician Assistant Board assures the public that all PA licensees and supervising physicians have met certain minimum requirements by

protecting the public, as well as the profession, from inadequately trained, unethical, or incompetent practitioners.

What types of services are provided by a PA?

A PA performs many of the same diagnostic, preventative, and health maintenance services as a physician. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Taking health histories
- Performing physical examinations
- Ordering X-rays and laboratory tests
- Ordering respiratory, occupational, or physical therapy treatments
- Performing routine diagnostic tests
- Establishing diagnoses
- Treating and managing patient health problems
- Administering immunizations and injections
- Instructing and counseling patients
- Providing continuing care to patients in the home, hospital, or extended care facility
- Providing referrals within the health care system
- Performing minor surgery
- Providing preventative health care services
- Acting as first or second assistants during surgery
- Responding to life-threatening emergencies

How does a PA work with a supervising physician?

A supervising physician and PA must have a written Delegation of Services Agreement, signed

and dated by each supervising physician, specifying the medical services the supervising physician is delegating to the PA. A supervising physician may supervise up to four PAs at any one time. The supervising physician must be available in person or by electronic communication at all times when the PA is caring for patients. The supervising physician has continuing responsibility to follow the progress of the patient and to make sure that the PA does not function autonomously.

Is a PA covered by malpractice insurance?

Yes. Generally, the PA works under the insurance policy of the employing physician or health facility. PAs may also carry their own malpractice insurance.

Do most insurance policies cover care provided by a PA?

Yes, most do. Some carriers bill for the PA directly, while others bill through the supervising physician. All reimbursements for Medi-Cal are usually made through the supervising physician or the employing institution. Medicare reimburses for services provided by the PA in hospitals and skilled nursing

For more information about physician assistants, a specific physician assistant, licensing requirements, or to file a complaint, contact:

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