

## Netter's Orthopaedic Clinical Examination: An Evidence-Based Approach (Netter Clinical Science)

Sports medicine is a fast-growing healthcare field that focuses on the treatment of athletic injuries. Sports medicine healthcare providers help athletes and other physically active patients improve movement and performance. These professionals also work to prevent illness and injury and treat sports-related injuries.

The field of sports medicine encompasses a variety of career paths, including physical therapy, athletic training, and exercise physiology. Those interested in healthcare and sports may find a career in this industry highly rewarding.

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### Why Pursue a Career in Sports Medicine?

Sports medicine healthcare providers give treatment to anyone who sustains injuries from physical activity – not just athletes. Because this field contains many different medical positions, the career path you take will depend on the degree level you choose and the environment you want to work in.

A sports medicine degree allows graduates to work in the healthcare and sports sectors. Those interested in treating all types of physically active patients, from young children to professional athletes, can pursue careers as physical therapists and exercise physiologists. If you are passionate about working exclusively with athletes, a career as an athletic trainer or team physician might be a good fit for you.

### Sports Medicine Career Outlook

The career outlook for sports medicine positions varies depending on a worker's role, educational level, and industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects the employment of athletic trainers will grow by 19% between 2018 and 2028, which is much faster than the average projected growth for all occupations in the U.S.

Graduates with a sports medicine bachelor's degree can pursue a career as an exercise physiologist. These professionals earn a median annual salary of \$49,170, and the BLS projects this occupation to grow by 10% from 2018-2028.

Other positions in this field, such as physical therapists and physicians, require a doctoral degree and have much higher earning potential. According to the BLS, physical therapists and team physicians earn median annual salaries of \$84,400 and more than \$208,000, respectively.

The table below features salaries for a few popular sports medicine careers, as well as salary prospects for professionals with various levels of work

experience.

Median Annual Salary for Sports Medicine Careers Job Title Entry-Level

0-12 months) Early Career

1-4 Years) Midcareer

5-9 Years) Experienced

10-19 Years) Sports Medicine Physician \$174,350 \$179,810 \$186,610 \$195,210 Occupational Therapist \$61,850 \$64,560  
\$71,130 \$76,060 Athletic Trainer \$39,410 \$40,760 \$45,570 \$49,180

Source: PayScale

Skills Gained With a Sports Medicine Degree

Through classwork, hands-on training, and experience, you can hone many in-demand skills that transfer to a variety of sports medicine careers. The following list outlines five common competencies that you can expect to gain from a sports medicine program.

Compassion

Compassion plays a vital role in sports medicine careers. Professionals must possess empathy for their patients and a genuine desire to help others. This skill cultivates patient trust and helps professionals provide higher levels of care.

Communication

Excellent oral and written communication skills allow sports medicine professionals to understand patients' needs and deliver effective treatment plans. These skills also promote professional collaboration and learning.

## Research

Sports medicine careers require professionals to stay up to date with the latest discoveries and advancements. Students in sports medicine degree programs hone research skills applicable to their career through research papers, projects, and other coursework.

## Organization

Organizational skills help sports medicine professionals manage dozens of patients, meet deadlines, and keep track of important information. These skills are particularly crucial for managers who are responsible for an organization's budget and personnel.

## Dexterity

As physical therapists spend much of their time therapeutically touching patients, they must possess excellent physical dexterity. This skill allows professionals to guide and assist patients without inflicting discomfort or harm. Internships and supervised mentoring help sports medicine students hone this skill.

## Sports Medicine Career Paths

As a broad field that contains positions in healthcare and sport, students can pursue a variety of career paths with a sports medicine degree. With an undergraduate degree, students can find job opportunities with hospitals and professional sports teams, where they may work as athletic trainers or exercise physiologists.

Alternatively, graduates with a master's degree can explore positions in clinical settings as occupational therapists or kinesiotherapists. Students can also go on to earn a doctor of physical therapy and become a licensed physical therapist.

## Health Informatics

This occupation combines sports medicine with information technology. Health informatics use technology to provide

better care and improve patient outcomes. Prior to starting their careers, graduates often earn the certified specialist in business intelligence certificate.

#### Executive Leadership

Some graduates with a master's in sports medicine pursue executive leadership positions. These professionals' responsibilities may include team management, strategic planning, and analyzing business strategies.

#### Athletic Training

Athletic trainers need specialized training to work with people recovering from sports injuries. They focus on injury prevention, common disabilities, and differentiating treatment for men and women.

#### Kinesiology

Kinesiologists study how anatomy, physiology, and lifestyle choices affect physical health. Kinesiologists who specialize in sports medicine can work as personal trainers and physical therapy assistants.

#### Popular Online Bachelor's in Sports Medicine Programs

Learn about start dates, transferring credits, availability of financial aid, and more by contacting the universities below.

#### How to Start Your Career in Sports Medicine

Sports medicine encompasses many industries and roles. Depending on their degree, graduates can pursue sports medicine careers as coaches, athletic trainers, physical therapists, physicians, and professors, among other roles.

The degree and concentration you select significantly impact your career choices. A bachelor's degree qualifies you for many entry-level roles, but a master's degree is typically needed for managerial and leadership roles. To work as a physician or professor, you must obtain a doctoral degree.

Bachelor's Degree in Sports Medicine A bachelor's in sports medicine or a related field represents the minimum degree you need to work in most sports medicine careers. After earning your bachelor's degree, you can continue your education in a master's program or look for entry-level positions. As some master's programs require applicants to possess relevant professional experience, you may need to work for a few years before applying to graduate school. What Can You Do With a Bachelor's in Sports Medicine? Collapse All

Expand All Athletic Trainer Chevron Down Chevron Up Athletic trainers work with athletes to identify and treat common sports injuries. Much of their job involves observing athletes for signs of injury and implementing rehabilitation programs. Bachelor's programs prepare students for this profession by covering essential anatomy and physiology topics, including first aid. Salary: \$48,440 Coach Chevron Down Chevron Up Coaches train athletes at all levels to play sports competitively. They organize practice sessions, mentor athletes, and provide encouragement and positive reinforcement. They also recruit new talent. Coaches can use their bachelor's in sports medicine education to help protect athletes from injury. Salary: \$34,840 Exercise Physiologist Chevron Down Chevron Up Exercise physiologists help patients with physical impairments and illnesses regain mobility and improve their overall health. They meet with patients, take vital signs, and create exercise programs that their patients can perform independently. A bachelor's in sports medicine provides these professionals with essential medical knowledge and skills. Salary: \$49,170 Recreational Therapist Chevron Down Chevron Up Like exercise physiologists, recreational therapists help patients with physical impairments and illnesses. However, recreational therapists often take a more hands-on approach by leading patients through activities. These professionals also focus on patients' mental health by holding group activities where patients with similar afflictions can bond with one another. Salary: \$48,220 High School Teacher Chevron Down Chevron Up Many sports medicine bachelor's graduates pursue careers as high school teachers in public or private schools. They often work as physical education or nutrition teachers, promoting healthier lifestyles through exercise and lessons on health and wellness. Other job duties may include mentoring students and addressing students' behavioral issues. Salary: \$61,660 Source: BLS

Master's Degree in Sports Medicine Sports medicine master's programs go into greater detail than bachelor's programs. They often include extensive, hands-on requirements and academic research that results in a thesis. Master's programs frequently fall into one of two categories: career preparation or doctorate preparation. The former stresses practical knowledge and skills, while the latter emphasizes academic research skills. Due to the specialized nature of master's programs, these often prepare students for specific sports medicine careers. What Can You Do With a Master's in Sports Medicine? Collapse All

Expand All Occupational Therapist Chevron Down Chevron Up Occupational therapists treat patients with injuries and disabilities through the therapeutic use of daily activities. They evaluate patient conditions, develop treatment plans, and help people with varying abilities perform daily tasks. Most states require that occupational therapists possess a license and a master's degree in occupational therapy, sports medicine, or a related field. Salary: \$84,950 Physician Assistant Chevron Down Chevron Up Physician assistants practice medicine under a licensed physician's guidance. They examine patients, prescribe medicine, and track patient recovery. Many physician assistants possess experience as EMTs or paramedics, although some come from the sports medicine field. A master's in sports medicine, along with some supplemental education, can prepare students for this career. Salary: \$112,260 Nurse Practitioner Chevron Down Chevron Up Nurse practitioners possess a highly advanced skill set. They perform medical tests, diagnose patient health problems, prescribe medicine, and create treatment plans. A nursing license, master's in sports medicine, and relevant certificate can qualify candidates for this position. Salary: \$115,800 Source: BLS

Doctoral Degree in Sports Medicine A doctorate is the terminal sports medicine degree. Many professionals earn this degree to learn about sports medicine best practices and advance into senior management positions. Doctoral programs tend to emphasize academic research, which prepares students for sports medicine careers in academia or at government agencies. Professionals who already possess terminal degrees in other fields may earn a second doctorate to modify or focus their career paths. For instance, surgeons may earn a doctorate in sports medicine to exclusively treat professional athletes. These medical specialists often earn higher salaries than physicians without a specialization. Full-time students typically earn a doctoral degree in sports medicine in 4-6 years, depending on their graduation requirements. What Can You Do With a Doctorate in Sports Medicine? Collapse All

Expand All Postsecondary Teacher Chevron Down Chevron Up Postsecondary teachers instruct students in college and university classrooms. Other job duties may include mentoring students and publishing research. These teachers often possess a doctoral degree and extensive experience. A doctorate qualifies graduates for tenure-track positions, which come with job security and managerial responsibilities. Salary: \$79,540 Physical Therapist Chevron Down Chevron Up Like many sports medicine careers, physical therapists help people with limited mobility regain function. Their advanced education allows them to work alongside doctors and nurses to create treatment plans. A doctorate in sports medicine prepares these professionals to work with diverse patients with different diseases and abilities. Salary: \$89,440 Physician Chevron Down Chevron Up Many physicians earn a Ph.D. in addition to a doctor of medicine to tailor their careers to match their interests. For instance, a physician with a doctorate in sports medicine can work as a team doctor or surgeon who specializes in a particular sports injury, such as a torn ACL or slipped vertebrae. Salary:

\$208,000+ Source: BLS

### How to Advance Your Career in Sports Medicine

Once you have earned a degree in sports medicine, there are several ways to further your career and increase your salary potential. Because many of these professionals work in clinical positions in the healthcare industry, the best way to advance your career largely depends on your current role and education level.

Healthcare professionals working as athletic trainers or exercise physiologists typically need to earn a master's degree to advance in their role. Continuing your education can position you for a career as an occupational therapist or sports kinesiologist.

Many top careers in this field require a doctorate and licensure, as well. Team physicians and physical therapists, for example, both need a doctorate and a license to practice. Additionally, continuing education units are required for many clinical positions in sports medicine.

### Certifications and/or Licensure

Many advanced careers in sports medicine — especially those in clinical settings — require additional licensing or certification. After earning a master's degree, occupational therapists need to gain state licensure, which includes passing the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy exam.

Most states also require aspiring athletic trainers to be licensed and take the Board of Certification for the Athletic Trainer exam. Alternatively, while exercise physiologists are not required to be licensed by most states, employers typically require basic life support or advanced life support certification.

After successfully completing a residency program, physical therapists must pass the National Physical Therapy Examination to become professionally licensed, while physicians must take the United States Medical Licensing Examination. Although not required, many sports medicine healthcare providers also hold certifications in specialty areas of medicine, such as emergency and internal medicine.

## Continuing Education

Depending on the sports medicine career you wish to pursue, you may need an advanced degree. Physician assistants and occupational therapists, for example, can continue their education beyond the master's degree level to become physical therapists or team physicians.

Physical therapists need a doctor of physical therapy, while team physicians need a doctor of medicine. Both occupations typically require a clinical residency in addition to a doctoral degree. Physical therapists and physicians looking to specialize further can participate in a fellowship in an advanced clinical area.

While certificate programs and online courses can help sharpen your knowledge and position you for higher earning potential, they usually do not lead to significant career advancement. Going back to school to earn an advanced degree and/or completing residency programs to obtain clinical experience are the best ways to advance your career in sports medicine.

## Next Steps

As most sports medicine healthcare professionals hold licenses and/or certifications, continuing education courses are typically required to maintain their qualifications and competencies. For example, certified athletic trainers and registered occupational therapists must take continuing education units regularly to maintain certification and stay relevant with new techniques and technologies in their field.

The continuing education units or hours that professionals must complete each renewal period vary by state. Physical therapists are required to take a certain number of continuing education courses every two years in order to renew their license. Alternatively, physicians working in states like Arkansas and Louisiana must take at least 20 hours of continuing medical education courses each year, although some states only require licensure renewal every two or three years.

Another way to enhance your professional skill set and career outlook is by joining professional organizations and networking. Becoming involved in these organizations allows you to attend conferences and meet distinguished professionals in your field. While continuing education is important and can lead to career advancements, networking



can help expand your career options beyond your current place of employment.

How to Switch Your Career to Sports Medicine Most careers in sports medicine require a degree in sports medicine or another closely related field, as well as additional certification and/or licensure. Since each sports medicine career requires different levels of education, it is important to decide which type of career path you intend to switch to. If you are interested in becoming an athletic trainer, you must earn a degree from an accredited athletic training program and successfully pass a certification exam. Other positions, such as occupational therapists and kinesiotherapists, typically require a master's degree and clinical experience, which usually takes about two years of postbaccalaureate study to obtain. Additionally, these professionals must be licensed. Positions that require a professional degree, such as physical therapists and physicians, are very difficult to transition into. Along with earning a doctorate, both of these occupations require extensive education and training, including clinical experience, residency programs, fellowships, and licensure. Obtaining qualifications for these careers typically requires several additional years of full-time study and practice.

Where Can You Work as a Sports Medicine Professional?

Sports medicine professionals work across the healthcare and education sectors. Many sports medicine healthcare providers work in hospitals, nursing facilities, and private offices and clinics, while others work directly for professional sports teams. Professionals can also find employment opportunities in fitness centers, colleges, and secondary schools.

Collapse All

Expand All General Medical and Surgical Hospitals Chevron Down Chevron Up General medical and surgical hospitals treat patients who need emergency medical care or surgical procedures. In this industry, sports medicine surgeons and physicians diagnose and treat injuries. Offices of Health Practitioners Chevron Down Chevron Up At health practitioners' offices, medical professionals meet with patients to discuss medical issues, diagnose illnesses, and create treatment plans. A health practitioner with a sports medicine background can specialize in a particular sports injury and provide expert care to patients. Nursing Care Facilities Chevron Down Chevron Up Nursing care facilities help patients with severe injuries and diseases regain mobility and attain a higher quality of life. Physical therapists and nurses with a degree in sports medicine can provide patients with specialized care. Spectator Sports

Chevron Down Chevron Up Sports medicine professionals work for spectator sports teams to create treatment plans for injured players. They assist players with physical therapy routines, observe players to watch for injuries, and provide on-field care. Elementary and Secondary Schools Chevron Down Chevron Up In elementary and secondary schools, coaches and physical education teachers use their sports medicine education to instill healthy habits in their students, promote physical health, and prevent injuries.

Interview With a Professional in Sports Medicine Weymouth Chiropractic and Wellness Center Dr. Scott Rosner Dr. Scott Rosner is the owner of Weymouth Chiropractic and Wellness Center in Massachusetts. In addition to a doctor of chiropractic degree, Dr. Scott holds a master's in sports science and rehabilitation. He is certified by the American Board of Chiropractic Sports Physicians. He is also the medical director for the Boston 13s Rugby Team and has previously worked with the LPGA tour, USA gymnastics, Ringling Bros. Circus, the BeyoncÃ© world tour, and the Taylor Swift Reputation tour. Collapse All

Expand All Why did you decide to pursue this field? Was it something you were always interested in? Chevron Down Chevron Up The reason I became a doctor of chiropractic was mainly my dad. He is also a chiropractor and I grew up helping him in his office by changing the face paper in each treatment room and showing patients to the rooms. In fact, in our fifth-grade yearbook, we were asked what we wanted to be when we grow up; most kids wrote movie star, athlete, or teacher, but I wrote chiropractor. As I went through my undergraduate studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I decided to pursue my interests in working with athletes and ended up working as an assistant in the athletic training department. One day, while in the training room, I was lucky enough to shadow the chiropractor for the athletic department and see my two loves of working with athletes and chiropractic in action. As graduation approached, I knew I wanted to become a chiropractor who focused on working with athletes. What are some of the greatest challenges you face on a day-to-day basis? Successes? Chevron Down Chevron Up Challenges when working with athletes involve being limited in the equipment you have available when providing on-field care; most of the time we have room for just a table and some portable tools. Being creative with care is important when dealing with athletes and limited on-field resources. Success when working in an athletic setting is when all providers that are part of the medical team are working together to ensure the course of action is in the athlete's best interest. In the clinical setting, success is when our patients are able to resume doing what brings them joy. Having worked in so many different settings -- academic, clinical, athletic, etc. -- is there one you find particularly rewarding? Chevron Down Chevron Up I enjoy all of them for different reasons. I enjoy teaching because I get to help kids learn more about the human body and cultivate a love for the sciences and healthcare, regardless of what profession they end up in. I love

working with athletes on the sideline as well as in the office because I get to be creative in how I approach their care and tailor it to their sport. If I had to choose, I would say I enjoy the clinical setting most of all because most patients are not elite athletes -- they are people with a problem that they have trusted me to help them with, and I love to hear that they can get back to doing the things that bring them joy. Clinical settings allow me to take techniques that I use for treating athletes and apply them to the general population. I enjoy watching as their range of motion, strength, and quality of life improves. What does continuing education look like for you? How do you stay up to date with new research and developments in the field? Chevron Down Chevron Up Each year, Massachusetts requires 12 hours of continuing education, and being a certified chiropractic sports physician requires these 12 hours to be in sports medicine. Most of my continuing education is from hands-on seminars that teach me a new technique or concept to help my patients. For instance, this past year I attended a FAKTR seminar. FAKTR stands for functional and kinetic treatment with rehabilitation and utilizes instrument-assisted soft tissue mobilization and various other manual techniques to personalize care based on a patient's musculoskeletal issues. While I've been certified in the concept for seven years, the hands-on seminar was a great refresher and the new research that was presented helped to validate the treatment concept. I also subscribe to a number of medical journals and use keywords to discover new studies regarding spine and joint health and treatment of soft tissue injuries. What advice would you give to someone considering a career in sports medicine? Chevron Down Chevron Up The best advice I can give is to shadow a variety of professionals in the sports medicine field to discover which roles you're most drawn to. Taking courses and attending seminars about sports medicine can help you make sure you are passionate about sports medicine. If you know that you absolutely want to pursue a career in sports medicine, then I suggest applying to schools with programs like exercise science and kinesiology. Make sure to diversify the electives you take within those programs to learn as many techniques as you can; every athlete is different and the more choices you have in your treatment toolbox, the faster you can help them recover.

#### Resources for Sports Medicine Majors

As the field of sports medicine continues to evolve in terms of evidence-based research and technological advances, there are many educational resources that can help assist current and aspiring practitioners. The following lists outline a few professional organizations and popular publications available to sports medicine students.

#### Frequently Asked Questions

Is sports medicine a good career?

If you like sports and exercise training, enjoy helping others improve their health and wellness, and feel comfortable working in a physically demanding environment, a career in sports medicine may be a great fit for you.

How do I start a career in sports medicine?

The minimum education requirement for most sports medicine careers is a bachelor's degree. However, if you are interested in working as a kinesiotherapist, team physician assistant, or occupational therapist, a master's degree from an accredited university is typically required.

What kind of jobs can you get with a sports medicine degree?

Available career options depend on the degree and specialization you select. Graduates with a bachelor's degree can work as athletic trainers, exercise physiologists, or recreational therapists. Graduates with a master's degree can pursue positions as occupational therapists or kinesiotherapists.

Is there a demand for sports medicine professionals?

In short, yes. As participation in sporting activities continues to increase, athletic injuries are becoming increasingly common. In turn, this creates a significant demand for healthcare professionals who specialize in sports medicine. The BLS projects the number of healthcare and social assistance jobs to grow by approximately 17% from 2018-2028.

How much do sports medicine professionals make?

Salaries vary greatly depending on your degree and career path. For example, while athletic trainers need at least a bachelor's degree, occupational therapists require a master's degree or higher. According to the BLS, these professionals earn median annual salaries of \$48,440 and \$84,950, respectively.

[Read More About Sports Medicine on BestColleges](#)

## Reference

[Training, Education and Research in COVID-19 Times](#)

[Ahmed Mohamed El Hassan: Milestones in tropical disease, pathology, cancer research & medical education \(Pioneers Paperbacks Series Book 3\)](#)