

WHOSE HANDS ARE YOU PUTTING YOUR HEALTH IN?

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One area that is ever changing is the face of fitness and wellness programs and the providers of these programs. As the benefits of exercise on our health, appearance, sense of well-being, and quality of life become increasingly obvious, each of us needs to be more aware of whom the fitness providers are and which program is right for us.

How Qualified is Your Fitness Provider

Physical Therapists

Physical therapists (PTs) are required to understand a vast array of problems that can affect movement, function, and health. PTs are the experts of movement and have extensive knowledge regarding human anatomy and physiology. All PTs possess an undergraduate degree, many with an additional 2-3 years of education in a Master's or clinical doctorate (DPT) in physical therapy from an accredited program. PTs must also pass a national board examination and be licensed by the state in which they practice. Physical therapy techniques can only be performed by a licensed physical therapist.

Personal Trainers

More than 300 groups certify personal trainers; however, many of these programs are weekend courses. Several well-known organizations are the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), and American Council on Exercise (ACE).

NSCA-Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) and NSCA-Certified Personal Trainer (CPT) certification were the first nationally accredited certification programs for personal trainers. Certification is awarded after passing a written exam. A college degree is required to take this exam.

Both ACE and ACSM certified personal trainers can obtain their certification by ordering study materials and taking an exam. ACSM offers an OPTIONAL one to three-day

workshop, while ACE does not require any workshop attendance. Only a high school diploma or equivalent is required for certification.

Certification from any of these organizations doesn't guarantee trainer excellence but rather only indicates that the person successfully passed the minimum requirements for certification.

Pilates Instructors

Pilates certification can generally be divided into two parts: Pilates mat certification, and comprehensive Pilates certification (which covers all of the Pilates equipment). The basic mat instructor certification programs are often offered as a weekend course while comprehensive Pilates certification requires at least 450 documented hours of training, including private lessons and basic education in anatomy and physiology.

Pilates training and certification exams are not standardized. The Pilates Method Alliance (PMA) is working towards more wide-spread standardization of teaching practices in the industry.

While certification is becoming the “norm,” there are still some Pilates instructors who are not “certified.” Some have been teaching Pilates since before the advent of certification.

Yoga Instructors

A yoga instructor should have a minimum of 200 hours of study, covering basic anatomy, kinesiology, physiology, and safety modifications. Most countries do not require yoga instructors to be registered.

There is no government backed regulator of yoga, Pilates, or personal training.

Things to Consider When Choosing a Fitness Provider:

Do not be embarrassed to ask questions. It's important that your fitness/wellness trainer has a strong knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology.

- Ask for references.
- Ask through what organization they are certified or what education background they have.
- Ask if they are trained in CPR/first aid.
- Ask for years of experience in the field.

- Ask if they have a specific age group expertise.

A Qualified Fitness Provider Should:

- Ask if you have any medical conditions or injuries of which they should be aware.
- Pay attention to your posture/body mechanics during exercise and correct deviations.
- Modify exercises to accommodate any discomfort you may experience.

If you have any questions concerning these issues, please do not hesitate to contact us at 818-905-1331.

All information contained within this article is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. You should consult with your health care professional for specific advice relating to your medical questions or conditions.