

Physiotherapy · Knee pain in a young footballer

SPK-PHY-01 | Original simulated candidate card

Setting: Physiotherapy clinic

You are a physiotherapist. Ms Courtney Tolhurst has brought her 12-year-old son, who has had pain and swelling just below his right kneecap for about two months. The pain gets worse during and after football. The GP referred him with probable Osgood-Schlatter disease. Your assessment today found a tender, slightly swollen bony area just below the kneecap, full knee movement, tight thigh muscles and no other worrying findings. Her son is now in the waiting room, and Ms Tolhurst has asked to speak with you alone.

Interlocutor: PARENT

Your tasks

1. Find out about Ms Tolhurst's concerns and her son's current sport and activity levels
2. Explain the condition in simple terms (cause, link to growth, likely course)
3. Reassure her that stopping all sport is not necessary, and explain how pain can guide activity
4. Outline the management plan (adjusting training load, ice after activity, stretching and strengthening exercises)
5. Agree a plan and arrange follow-up

Physiotherapy · Back pain - the patient wants a scan and bed rest

SPK-PHY-02 | Original simulated candidate card

Setting: Physiotherapy clinic

You are a physiotherapist. Mr Murali Easwaran, aged 42, is an office worker who has had low back pain for two weeks. His GP referred him to you after an assessment found no signs of a serious cause, and your own examination today agrees with this. He has told the receptionist that he expected to have an MRI scan first and that he has been resting at home until the pain goes.

Interlocutor: PATIENT

Your tasks

1. Find out how the pain is affecting Mr Easwaran's daily life and what he has been doing to manage it
2. Explain why a scan is not needed at this stage (no warning signs of a serious problem, scans often show changes that are not causing the pain)
3. Persuade him that keeping active is better for recovery than resting in bed
4. Explain a graded activity and exercise plan (walking, gentle exercises, breaking up periods of sitting)
5. Agree a plan, including a gradual return to work, a review appointment, and warning signs that need emergency help (numbness around the buttocks or genitals, bladder or bowel problems, worsening leg weakness)

Physiotherapy · Physiotherapist: breathing exercises and getting out of bed after open bowel surgery

SPK-PHY-03 | Original simulated candidate card

Setting: Surgical ward

You are a physiotherapist. Mr Oluwaseun Ekwueme, aged 63, had open surgery yesterday to remove part of his large bowel. He is an ex-smoker, and on your assessment he is taking shallow breaths with reduced air entry at the bases of both lungs. He has refused to do his deep breathing exercises or sit out of bed because his wound hurts.

Interlocutor: PATIENT

Your tasks

1. Find out about Mr Ekwueme's pain, how he is using his pain relief and what is stopping him from moving and breathing deeply
2. Explain why deep breathing, coughing and getting out of bed early are important after his operation (risk of chest infection, ex-smoker)
3. Demonstrate and explain how to support his wound when coughing and moving (pillow or folded towel)
4. Reassure him about his concerns and persuade him to try the exercises
5. Agree a plan, including asking the nursing staff to review how he is feeling and to time his pain relief before he gets out of bed again

Physiotherapy · Falls at home - keep Dad in a wheelchair?

SPK-PHY-04 | Original simulated candidate card

Setting: Home visit

You are a community physiotherapist. You are visiting a 79-year-old man with Parkinson's disease who has fallen twice at home in the past month. He was not seriously injured either time. His GP has referred him for a falls assessment. He lives with his daughter, Ms Rocio Cabello, aged 52, who is his full-time carer. Before the visit, she phoned to say she wants him to use a wheelchair all the time.

Interlocutor: CARER

Your tasks

1. Find out about the falls and how Ms Cabello is coping (circumstances, timing with his tablets, any dizziness, her own health and support)
2. Explain how sitting most of the day could affect him and why his walking and moving need assessing before deciding how to use a wheelchair (strength, balance, independence)
3. Reassure Ms Cabello that her concerns are valid and persuade her to try a safe, active approach (assessment first, support for her)
4. Advise her what to do if he falls again (do not lift him, check for injury, when to call for help)
5. Agree a plan (home changes, blood pressure and medication review, mobility and equipment assessment, exercise, follow-up)

Physiotherapy · Walking the day after hip fracture surgery

SPK-PHY-05 | Original simulated candidate card

Setting: Hospital orthopaedic ward

You are a physiotherapist on an orthopaedic ward. Mr Bo Tse's 84-year-old mother fractured her hip in a fall at home and yesterday had internal fixation with metalwork. The surgical team has cleared her for weight bearing as tolerated. This morning you stood her up and she took a few steps with a frame, but she found it painful and became tearful. Her son has just arrived, has heard about the session, and has asked to speak to you.

Interlocutor: RELATIVE

Your tasks

1. Acknowledge Mr Tse's anger and find out what is worrying him about his mother walking so soon (what he was told, what he saw, any other changes)
2. Explain in lay terms why it is safe for her to stand and walk on the repaired hip
3. Explain why getting up early is important for her recovery (risks of staying in bed, getting home)
4. Reassure him about how her pain and safety will be managed during sessions
5. Agree how he can support her physiotherapy while she is on the ward