

## Physiotherapy Benefits for Individuals with Huntington's Disease in Residential Care and Nursing Homes: A Reference Guide

**Physiotherapy is a cornerstone in the holistic care of individuals with Huntington's Disease living in residential care and nursing homes.**

### Understanding Huntington's Disease (HD):

Huntington's Disease (HD) is an inherited neurodegenerative disorder that affects movement, cognition, and behaviour. It progressively damages nerve cells in the brain, leading to physical and mental decline significantly impacting the affected persons' daily functioning. Those residing in care settings present distinctive and intricate needs that are frequently not addressed in-home environments. Typically, these individuals necessitate nursing care with heightened monitoring with provision of comprehensive and multifaceted care.

### Stages of Huntington's Disease

#### Early Stage

Motor symptoms: Minor involuntary movements.

Cognitive changes: Mild decline in concentration.

Physiotherapy focus: Establishing baseline function, promoting structured exercise routines.



#### Middle Stage

Motor symptoms: Increased difficulty in coordination.

Cognitive changes: Progressive decline in memory and decision-making.

Physiotherapy focus: tailored balance and gait training, implementing adaptive strategies.



#### Late Stage

Motor symptoms: Severe impairment, limited voluntary movement.

Cognitive changes: Profound cognitive decline.

Physiotherapy focus: Caregiver training, passive range of motion exercises, respiratory management, seating adaptations and optimal positioning for comfort.



Health professionals are encouraged to explore evidence-based interventions, collaborate with multidisciplinary teams, and stay updated on the latest research for optimal patient outcomes. For personalized advice, consult with HD specialist physiotherapist or visit the suggested websites for more information.

**HD physiotherapy guidelines (Quinn et al 2022) highlighted the positive effects of targeted physiotherapy on motor function in HD, importance of tailored exercise regimens in slowing disease progression and the significance of multidisciplinary collaboration for comprehensive care.**

### **How Can You Access Physiotherapy Services?**

- Speak to the Care Team and discuss the possibility of physiotherapy with the nursing home staff.
- Request a referral from the resident's physician.
- Contact local physiotherapy services for on-site support.

### **Resources and Further Information**

European Huntington's Disease Network (EHDN) - Physiotherapy Working Group: Explore evidence-based practices and research. Website: <https://ehdn.org/physiotherapy-wg/>

International Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society (MDS): Information on movement disorders, including HD. Website: <https://www.movementdisorders.org/>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS): Comprehensive resources on Huntington's Disease. Website: [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov)

Your local Huntington's Disease Association (HDA) and patient support groups: In England and Wales, the HDA has provided useful resources for physiotherapists and health professionals. Website: <https://www.hda.org.uk/professionals-and-training/resources-for-professionals/>