

Ask a physical therapist to 'screen' your movements this spring

By David Bertone, PT, DPT, OCS

Let's talk about the last time you—or someone close to you—interviewed for a new job. Chances are that the first step was a phone screen with your potential employer, and when you passed that portion of the process with flying colors, you were then invited for an in-person interview. At that stage, the employer probably asked you to answer a series of questions and to demonstrate your skills through a test or two. The process is set up in a way that narrows down the options until the most suitable candidate is found. Makes sense, right?

Just as job recruiters screen applicants to find the best fit for an open position, your physical therapist will ask you to perform a series of exercises so that he/she can observe and understand your body mechanics to uncover any issues or limitations. Used in combination with a full evaluation and assessment, these so-called movement screens are just one tool in identifying the most appropriate treatment or prevention program for you. But unlike that test you may have taken during a job interview, the screen is not testing your skills or abilities, it's simply a way of identifying how your body functions during a variety of movements.

Now that spring is in full swing, it's the perfect time of year to make an appointment with your physical therapist for a movement screen. The warmer weather means more time spent outdoors participating in sports and other recreational activities that may be physically demanding. A physical therapy checkup that includes a movement screen will ensure that you're physically able to engage in

popular spring and summer adventures, whether it's exploring in the woods, tending to your garden, or swimming at your family's lake house.

Physical therapists perform movement screens for a variety of reasons, including:

- To identify areas of strength and weakness
- To uncover issues or rule them out
- To determine readiness to begin a safe exercise program
- To improve sport performance (for both novice and elite athletes)

A movement screen is something that you can have done whether you have a nagging injury or are simply ready to kickstart your activity level after a long hiatus. Gaining an understanding of how your body performs during basic exercises such as squats and lunges helps your physical therapist ensure that you can safely jump on a bike or into a pool this summer. And just like an employer screens candidates to identify the one individual who is likely to thrive on the job for many years to come, a movement

screen can help you develop a lasting and fulfilling relationship with the activities you enjoy most.

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Injury

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Dr. Ira A. Shapiro is the director of the Plaza Chiropractic Center, which he founded in Old Bridge in 1984. Recently selected to the American Chiropractic Association Sports Council Hall of Fame and a two-time member of the U.S. Olympic team medical staff, Dr. Shapiro has spent the past 30 years providing safe, gentle and effective chiropractic care to tens of thousands of patients ranging from community members to professional athletes competing at the world's highest levels.

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