

One of the questions we as physical therapists commonly get asked is ***“How is physical therapy different from chiropractic or massage?”***

At Hulst Jepsen Physical Therapy we incorporate techniques similar to what chiropractors and massage therapists use with some key alterations and additions.

### **MANUAL THERAPY**

Hulst Jepsen physical therapists are trained in joint mobility assessment and joint mobilization techniques of the spine and extremities. We utilize spinal mobilization techniques similar to those chiropractors use with the exception of limiting use of high velocity thrust. We have found high velocity thrust can produce injury and believe it should be used sparingly. Our belief is most neck and back injuries do not need to be “cracked” to get better.

Hulst Jepsen physical therapists are also trained in a variety of soft tissue techniques similar to those a massage therapist might use. The difference here would be physical therapists have a significantly greater amount of education in the anatomy of soft tissues (muscles, tendons, ligaments) than massage therapists do.

Every patient who comes to Hulst Jepsen Physical Therapy gets some form of “hands on” treatments, be it joint mobilization, soft tissue techniques, isolated muscle stretching or muscle energy (using muscle stretch and contraction to mobilize joints). These manual therapy techniques are important in expediting healing but we believe this is only one piece of treating injuries.

### **MODALITIES**

Another component of physical therapy are therapeutic modalities. Physical therapists utilize hot packs/cold packs, ultrasound (deep heat utilizing sound waves), electrical stimulation (electrical current to relax muscles and decrease pain and swelling), and iontophoresis (patch where medication is electrically pushed into a localized area).

### **TRACTION**

Physical therapists utilize mechanical traction for neck and back problems. A machine produces decompression and separation of neck or low back vertebrae.

### **EDUCATION AND SPECIFIC EXERCISES**

What most physical therapists hang their hat on as the “most important” things they can do for a patient is to first educate the patient how to avoid reinjuring their affected body part and second to prescribe specific exercises for addressing deficits in strength, muscle activation, and/or flexibility. If the manual therapy techniques loosen tight areas, get things into better alignment, balance out unbalances what is going to keep things there? This is where education and specific exercises come into play. Physical therapists are best equipped to not only help you get better but even more importantly to keep you there.