



## Introduction

**Good Health Physical Therapy and Wellness**  
Goodhealthphysicaltherapy.com

### **You are Strong and Courageous**

You are strong and courageous. How do we know? If you are reading this you have likely been facing one or many health challenges for some time. And you have been doing your best to live and function each day. That takes strength and courage. We are here to listen to you and to support you in your healing journey. In particular, we hope to support you being even more empowered to get your symptoms under control, to know the best ways to manage the health challenges and to get back to doing what you want to and need to be able to do for all the life you deserve.

### **Good Health Physical Therapy and Wellness**

Good Health Physical Therapy and Wellness is an outpatient physical therapy clinic with locations in Southwest and Northeast Portland. We are a full-service outpatient clinic seeing sports injuries, car accident cases and the full range of musculoskeletal problems. Our treatment sessions are one hour of one-on-one time with a therapist. Our therapy team is highly experienced with many decades of experience and with training and experience in many different therapeutic approaches. Most especially, all of our therapists are skilled in working with the spectrum of hypermobility disorders and Ehlers Danlos Syndrome along with the conditions and problems associated.

### **Hypermobility and Ehlers Danlos**

Many of our patients have health challenges related to connective tissue problems which cause excessive and painful mobility in their joints. The diagnoses for this are on a spectrum from Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD) to one of the multiple types of Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS), the most common of which by far (90%) is hypermobile Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (hEDS). Because connective tissue is everywhere in the human body, these disorders can give rise to health issues in many systems of the body. One commonly associated disorder is Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (or Disorder, MCAS or MCAD). Mast cells live in the connective tissue and serve the important function of releasing chemicals to start the healing process in the event of a cut or injury. This healing process usually starts with inflammation. But when connective tissue is not normal, the mast cells can be too active and cause excessive inflammation. Another common associated problem is Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS). This is an imbalance of the involuntary (autonomic) nervous system which controls the opening and constriction of blood vessels in the body and with this heart rate and blood pressure. It usually shows up as dizziness and racing heart with standing or with position changes or sometimes just at random times.

### **Knowledge is Power**

While there is no magic cure for any of the problems above, there are treatments which can greatly reduce their impact. We believe that the first step with each of these problems is education. This is the first of a series of patient education handouts – the Strong and Courageous series – aimed at helping you to learn more about your condition, to learn the controllable triggers of flareups, and to learn the steps you can take to claim back your power, your ability to function and your life. Your therapist will give you individual handouts and homework based on your individual case.

## The Physical Therapy Process

Physical therapy is a healing rehabilitation profession focused on helping you to be able to comfortably get back to what you want to and need to be able to do in life -- to be able to move. After evaluating a case, physical therapists mostly rely on three main tools: teaching, manual therapies (use of our hands) and physical exercises. As we have said, knowledge is power and teaching is the gateway to that power. Physical therapists use our hands to help to restore balance in the body, to improve movement patterns and lessen pain. There are many approaches to this but most of the approaches used with HDS and EDS are gentle soft tissue stretching, balancing or release techniques such as myofascial release, positional release, craniosacral therapy, visceral manipulation and occasionally joint mobilization. Stretching exercises can be helpful in most cases. At some point in almost all cases of HDS and EDS strengthening exercises progressed gradually and gently will help to restore balance. Expect homework.

## How Long Will This Last?

We are committed to walking the healing journey with you for as long as you need us, but not farther. One of the ways we seek to know how far to walk with you is to set goals, tangible functional activities that you want to get back to doing. As in most journeys, where you are starting from and where you are trying to get to are big factors in determining how long it will take. In the early stages of therapy, and depending on how flared up your conditions are, we will likely suggest seeing you more frequently early in the process and less frequently as you improve. At some point, we will recommend stopping when you are close to or have achieved your goals. Stopping therapy and using what you have learned is often an important step in your empowerment. (And we are here if you need us further along in your journey.)

## About Pain

Many, probably most, of our patients come in suffering from a lot of pain. We have no desire to add to this and, after evaluating your case, will seek to follow whatever gentle approach we can use to bring your pain level down before progressing activity. As was said above though, many of the conditions we work with do not have a magic cure. We want you to be empowered through knowledge and exercise to avoid the flareups of pain. Can we promise no pain though? No. We think a more realistic expectation is to work toward “minimal and manageable pain”.

### ➤ Homework Step One: Build Your Team.

In the face of any serious problem, the first step toward solving it is often to gather resources. With a serious health problem, this usually means finding professionals to help – building a team. In many cases that we see, we are happy and proud to be the full team for the patient. But physical therapy is a rehabilitation profession and we are not medical providers. In many cases, involvement of medical providers skilled in the management of the problems listed above is invaluable. Medications and supplements are often crucial in the management of POTS and MCAS. Your therapist may make a referral. **We recommend that our patients with HDS and EDS join the Oregon Area Ehlers Danlos Support Group on Facebook.** With more than 2700 members, this community can offer provider recommendations and great support in building your team.

➤ **Homework Step Two: Start Reading**

We recommend several informational websites as good sources of information depending on the problems you are facing.

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS): <https://www.ehlers-danlos.com/>

Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS): <https://tmsforacure.org/overview/>

Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS): <https://www.dinet.org/>

**Notes:**