

HIP•PO•THER•A•PY

The use of horses to facilitate traditional methods of therapy, including physical, occupational and speech-language.

A. A horse has the same hind leg and spinal alignment as a human. When someone is riding a horse, in a way it almost feels like they are walking. The three-dimensional movements — up-down, side-side, front-back — of a horse pelvis are very similar to that of a human pelvis.

B. The consistent and repetitive motion of a horse walking or trotting stimulates the nervous system of the person on the horse and facilitates increased physical and cognitive function.

C. The patient may be sitting or lying on the horse in various positions depending on the desired outcome.

D. It is not uncommon for the horse and rider to be supported by a number of people: the horse handler, the therapist and supporters on each side.

E. Horses must go through extensive training and practice before working with patients. Important characteristics include good temperament and high tolerance.

