Why Would I Need Occupational Therapy?

The aging process, accidents, illness, injury, or disease can change our ability to participate in daily activities, but occupational therapy can help you stay active and live well despite limitations. For example, during recovery from a joint replacement you may need new ways to dress, bathe, and prepare meals. Pain from arthritis and other conditions can make it difficult to drive safely, walk through a grocery store, or maintain favorite hobbies. Powerful medications can lead to fatigue and memory loss, restricting social opportunities. Occupational therapy looks at you, your environment, your needs, and your social supports to create an approach that will help you live life to its fullest. An occupational therapist will evaluate your situation and, with input from you (and perhaps your family, care provider, or friend), develop individualized goals that allow you to resume or pursue your valued occupations.

After you develop goals with your occupational therapist, you will work together on a specific intervention plan to help improve or maintain your ability to perform daily activities and reach your goals for getting back to your life.

Occupational therapy practitioners can widen their focus to groups or communities too, developing and implementing programs that promote healthy behaviors, or address particular issues such as safe older driving, falls prevention, accessibility in the home and community, mental health, and addictions.

When Do I Need Occupational Therapy?

Have you or a family member ever been diagnosed with a new health condition and found yourself asking, “now what?” Maybe a spouse has been diagnosed with dementia and you want to know how you can help enhance quality of life. Perhaps an aging parent wants to remain at home but there are concerns about safety and well-being while living alone. Or maybe you have undergone surgery and you want to be as independent as possible during and after the recovery period. Occupational therapy can help you answer that “now what?” question. Research shows that occupational therapy can:

- **Support independence and safety** through home modifications, driving rehabilitation, and falls prevention training.
- **Improve quality of life** for persons with dementia and their caregivers by modifying the environment and specific stressors.
- **Enhance function** through rehabilitation after a stroke, surgery, or other medical incidents.
- **Support leisure activities** by helping to compensate for chronic conditions such as low vision or diabetes.

In short, an occupational therapy practitioner can help you live life to its fullest no matter your health condition, disability, or risk factors.

Who Are Occupational Therapy Practitioners?

Occupational therapy practitioners are either occupational therapists or occupational therapy assistants. They are skilled health care professionals who use research and scientific evidence to ensure that their interventions are effective. With strong knowledge of a person’s psychological, physical, emotional, cognitive, and social makeup, occupational therapy practitioners can evaluate how your condition (or risk for one) is affecting your ability to participate in life and provide ways to overcome any barriers, using a holistic perspective. Occupational therapy practitioners are the only professionals who look at the relationships among the person, the environment, and the occupation to support health and well-being through everyday activities.

Do you need more information?
Visit our Web site at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org) to find out more about how occupational therapy can work for you!
What is Occupational Therapy?

Your life is made up of occupations—meaningful everyday activities. These occupations can include many roles, such as being a parent, a grandparent, an employee, a business owner, a golfer, an artist, a cook, or a friend. We generally don’t think about our daily occupations until we have trouble doing them. Everyone has occupations—from the grandparent who enjoys taking care of grandchildren during the day, to the adult volunteer, to the caregiver who helps a spouse remain independent. If you have a medical condition, your health status changes, or you are recovering from an accident or injury, your valued occupations may be disrupted or limited. Occupational therapy focuses on your valued occupations and integrates them into the prevention, wellness, and rehabilitation processes. The goal of occupational therapy is to help you do what you need and want to do in everyday life.

Where Can I Get Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy practitioners work in a variety of settings—including hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing facilities, community centers, and health care facilities, and they can even come to your home.

How Do I Schedule an Occupational Therapy Visit?

Ask your physician about a referral for occupational therapy services or look for a private practice in your community. Get more information about occupational therapy at www.aota.org.

What is Occupational Therapy?

Answering the six Qs—what, why, who, when, where, and how—about occupational therapy.