

April: Occupational Therapy Month®



April is Occupational Therapy Month®, a time to celebrate the profession of occupational therapy and highlight the value occupational therapists bring to the health care team. Let's explore all that occupational therapists do for us!

What is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapists perform a variety of services for patients that help them return to performing activities of daily living. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, occupational therapists “enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote health, and prevent—or live better with—injury, illness, or disability.” The profession of occupational therapy is founded in science and supported by research.

You may see occupational therapists working with children with disabilities to help them succeed in school, treating people with a variety of injuries so they can regain skills ranging from dressing and cooking to performing heavy lifting on their jobs, and assisting older adults when they report cognitive changes or difficulty doing everyday things. Occupational therapists treat people with strokes, Parkinson disease, brain injuries, muscle tears, joint problems, broken bones, nerve injuries, chronic health conditions, and many more conditions that impact the way people function in their home, work, and social environment. Occupational therapists can also make splints and assist people in finding the appropriate adaptive equipment for their situation.

An occupational therapist will have completed a master's degree or a doctoral degree from an accredited school and passed the licensure exam. An occupational therapist assistant will have completed a 2-year associate's degree from an accredited school and passed the licensure exam.

Where do Occupational Therapists Work?

Occupational therapists serve patients in hospitals, private practice settings, schools, nursing homes, rehab settings, and a variety of other places. Occupational therapists work as part of an integrative team and collaborate with physicians, nurses, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and other healthcare professionals to provide meaningful, individualized treatment for patients and their families.

If you are struggling to do what you want and need to do around your house and/or at work, call your doctor and ask about a referral to occupational therapy.

What Should I Expect at my First Visit?

If it is your first time seeing the occupational therapist, he or she will perform an individualized evaluation and talk with you to see what you hope to gain from occupational therapy. This will involve hearing from you how your injury or condition is preventing you from doing what you want to do. The occupational therapist will also take some type of objective measurement, such as range of motion, strength, reflexes, sensation, endurance, etc. The occupational therapist will help you set realistic goals and use his or her clinical expertise to help you accomplish them.

You may also work with an occupational therapist assistant (OTA). The OTA will follow the plan of care made by the occupational therapist and will be supervised by the occupational therapist throughout your treatment. Your occupational therapist will communicate with the OTA about your progress in therapy.

Celebrate Occupational Therapy Month®

Occupational therapists and occupational therapist assistants work tirelessly for their patients and clients! Let's take this month to honor all that they do for us and thank them for the variety of services they provide. Happy OT Month!

This information was found from the American Occupational Therapy Association. For more information, click on the following link: <https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/OTMonth/what-is-OT.aspx>