



WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY?

Occupational therapy is an essential health service dedicated to helping people achieve independence, meaning and satisfaction in all aspects of their lives. Whether it is in the home, hospital, community, school or private practice, occupational therapists are available to help.

The use of the term "occupation" refers to everything that people do during the course of everyday life, or all the activities that occupy one's time. The profession itself is built on the belief of strength and ability, and uses everyday activities (or occupations) as the foundation for supporting health and well-being through actions related to self-care, productivity and leisure.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY - WORKING FOR YOU!

To support the occupations of life, occupational therapists work with individuals or groups to define goals and develop a plan to achieve those goals. Occupational therapists may use their education to specialize in working with clients within a specific age group or disability such as those with arthritis, developmental coordination disorders, mental illness, or spinal cord injury. Educated to help those who are young, old or any age in between, occupational therapists are valuable coaches to help clients do what they want to do.

In addition to working directly with clients, occupational therapists evaluate the environments in which people work, play and live to minimize barriers and maximize participation. For example, in-home assessments, workplace assessments, and ergonomic assessments all lead to an expertise of "what works". This expertise is used to promote the design of tools, equipment, and environments that promote healthy living, through work and play.

SUPPORT FOR LIFE AND LIVING

When an injury, illness, or disability limits the ability to participate in occupations of life, an occupational therapist is trained to identify individual strengths and priorities, and to suggest modifications to improve function and participation in everyday tasks.

Assessments are personalized, taking into account the tasks and needs specific to the individual, within a particular environment such as the home, workplace, school, community or vehicle. The goals of an assessment and the interventions are to ensure clients are comfortable and in control of the activities of daily living, such as taking care of yourself, engaging in paid or unpaid work, or enjoying your leisure time.

HOW AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Occupational therapists are skilled observers and as such, they can identify new skills which will enable you to do what you need and want to do. The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) has developed a series of tools and resources to promote health and well-being for Canadians throughout their lifecycle. Whether it is helping children adapt and learn at school based on their individual needs and strengths, supporting older drivers, preventing injury through fall prevention, or finding solutions for the workplace, occupational therapy is proven to increase the ability to manage everyday tasks and even reduce the need for other health interventions.

ASK FOR IT!

If you think occupational therapy will work for you, **Ask for it!**

- Ask your primary health care provider for a referral
- Ask your health benefits provider if occupational therapy is covered
- Ask your local health region, community care centres, or your Minister of Health how you can receive occupational therapy

CAOT can also help you find an occupational therapist in your community with the help of the "OT Finder" database: www.caot.ca