

## Occupational therapy Helping people to live life their way

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who help people of all ages – babies, children, adults and older people – to carry out activities (or occupations) they need, want, or are expected to do, but are prevented from doing so as a result of physical or mental illness, disability, or as a result of changes in their lives as they get older.

Occupational therapists can suggest alternative ways of doing activities, providing advice on learning new approaches, helping people to get the most from life. For example, an occupational therapist can help people with the following activities:

<b>Self-care:</b>	Getting dressed, using the toilet, preparing and eating meals.
<b>Productivity:</b>	Going to or remaining in work, volunteering, studying, or caring for others.
<b>Leisure:</b>	Playing sports, shopping with friends, or doing hobbies.



For leisure, learning, living or working  
**Occupational therapy**  
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### How to find an occupational therapist

Ask your GP, nurse, social worker or other health or social care professional to refer you to an occupational therapist.

You can self-refer to a social services occupational therapist by contacting your local council\* to arrange an appointment.

To arrange a private consultation with an independent occupational therapist, who will charge you a fee, please visit [www.cotss-ip.org.uk](http://www.cotss-ip.org.uk) to find a local independent occupational therapist.

\*Social work departments in Scotland  
\*Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland

### College of Occupational Therapists Limited

*The professional body for occupational therapy staff*

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Occupational therapy and **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

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## Helping your child develop and thrive

It is important for babies, infants, children and young people to grow, learn, have fun, socialise and play so they can develop, thrive and reach their full potential.

## What is occupational therapy?

Occupational therapy enables people to participate in daily life to improve their health and wellbeing. Daily life is made up of many activities (or occupations). Occupations for children or young people may include self-care (getting ready to go out, eating a meal, using the toilet), being productive (going to nursery or school, or volunteering), and leisure (playing with friends or doing hobbies).

## Who do occupational therapists help?

Occupational therapists help babies, children and young people who may need support and advice if they are not able to do occupations due to illness, disability, family circumstances, or as a result of changes in their lives as they get older.

## How occupational therapy can help

An occupational therapist will need to identify and understand your child's usual occupations to discover what difficulties they face. They will support you and

other relevant people such as teachers, to evaluate your child's challenges and strengths to help them to do those occupations that are important to you and your child. The occupational therapist may suggest alternative ways of doing things, providing advice on learning new approaches and techniques, or making changes to the environment, for example, through using equipment or adaptations.

## If your child is experiencing difficulties doing things, occupational therapy can help. Some examples are listed below:

### Self-care

**As children and young people develop, looking after themselves becomes increasingly important, so they make a successful transition into adulthood.**

An occupational therapist will work with the family of a baby or infant to help establish a routine and develop suitable techniques for occupations such as sleeping, feeding and bathing. As the child becomes older, an occupational therapist will help the child to develop skills and techniques for everyday activities such as dressing, using the toilet, or participating in mealtimes. In their teenage years, the occupational therapist will focus on supporting the young person to look after themselves so they can participate in school, college, work or leisure activities.

### Education

**Learning and being productive is vital for children and young people; it gives them a sense of purpose and opens up opportunities.**

An occupational therapist will recommend ways to position a baby and suggest activities so they can experience new things and learn whilst playing. As the child reaches school age, an occupational therapist will work with school staff to develop a child's skills or recommend changes to the environment so they can successfully participate in the classroom, such as using scissors, cutting and pasting, or drawing. As the child gets older, an occupational therapist will explore techniques with teaching staff so the young person can reach their potential in the classroom.

## Play and leisure

**Having fun is extremely important for children and young people; it is through play and leisure that learning happens and friendships are formed.**

An occupational therapist will support parents to help their baby succeed through play. When the child gets older, an occupational therapist can assist the child to make friends and play at home, school and in the community. For the young person, an occupational therapist will support them to develop interests, socialise, and take part in hobbies.



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