



What Does Occupational Therapy Have To Do With My Child?

Your child's life is made up of occupations, or everyday activities. These occupations include playing, learning, sleeping and resting, interacting with friends, getting dressed, and other daily activities. Many of us generally don't think about a child's daily occupations until he or she has challenges doing them. Everyone has occupations—from the toddler whose occupations are playing and learning, to the older child whose occupations are being a student and developing the skills to become more independent. Occupational therapy supports children of all ages—newborns to teenagers—by incorporating the occupations that are important to you and your child into the intervention process, whether it is at school, during rehabilitation, or at a medical facility.

AOTA® The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

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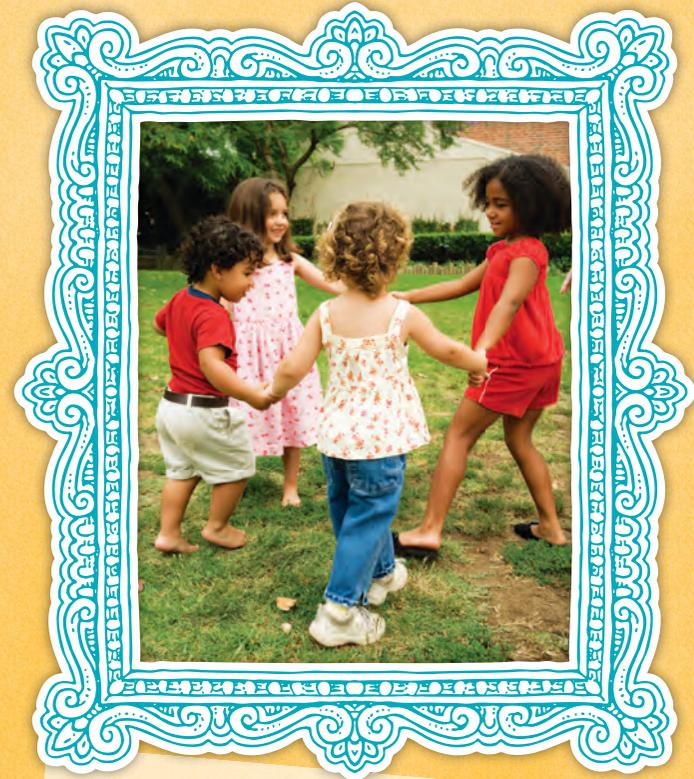
Living Life To Its Fullest®
O C C U P A T I O N A L T H E R A P Y

Where Can I Receive Occupational Therapy Services?

Occupational therapy practitioners work in a variety of settings—including schools, clinics, Head Start Programs, community centers, hospitals, and homes.

How Do I Contact an Occupational Therapy Practitioner?

Talk to your child's teacher about occupational therapy services at school. In schools, when educationally necessary, OT services are provided at no cost to families as they are provided under IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Ask your physician about a recommendation for occupational therapy services. Medicaid and private insurance may cover occupational therapy. Get more information about occupational therapy at www.aota.org.



What Is Occupational Therapy?

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

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Why Would My Child Need Occupational Therapy?

There are many ways occupational therapy might help your child.

The core of occupational therapy is to promote participation.

This can mean helping a child who has concentration challenges to succeed in school, supporting a child with autism to socialize, helping a child who uses a wheelchair to play with his or her peers, helping a child with a developmental disability get dressed independently, helping all children to play with toys or use tools such as crayons—addressing whatever may be a particular child's skills and needs.

An occupational therapist will evaluate your child (as well as the environment and the task or activity) and, with additional input from you, develop individualized goals that address resuming or pursuing things that are important to your child and family. You and the occupational therapist will then work together on an individualized intervention plan to help improve or maintain your child's ability to perform daily activities and reach those goals. This plan will take into account what your child wants and needs to do, as well as his or her abilities, which may include modifying both the task and the environment to allow your child to be as independent as possible.

Occupational therapy practitioners also focus on prevention, promoting healthy lifestyles, and addressing mental health. For the young child, occupational therapy focuses on promoting growth and development and helps families with caregiving strategies. Occupational therapy practitioners can widen their focus to groups or school-wide initiatives, which includes anti-bullying strategies, ways to address obesity, and promoting good school design.



When Does My Child Need Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy supports a child's and family's ability to participate in daily activities, such as getting ready for bed or taking the bus to school. **An occupational therapy practitioner will keep the focus on the things you and your child need and want to do—your child's and family's goals, your child's activities, your child's independence and function and success.** Occupational therapy services can help your child:

- Achieve goals and develop life skills; for example, helping your teenager with a developmental disability gain the skills to transition from high school toward further education, employment, and independent living as an adult.
- Stay as healthy and productive as possible; for example, helping your middle schooler develop routines for completing homework assignments and providing fun, safe ways to engage in physical activities.
- Participate in everyday activities; for example, providing age-appropriate toys for your infant or toddler so he or she can reach developmental milestones, and developing the skills to interact socially.

In short, an occupational therapy practitioner can help all children live life to its fullest.

Who are Occupational Therapy Practitioners?

Occupational therapy practitioners are either occupational therapists or occupational therapy assistants. Occupational therapy practitioners serve children, youth, and their families by promoting active participation in daily activities and offering prevention, promotion, and interventions for various populations and settings. **They are skilled professionals who use research and scientific evidence to ensure that their interventions help your child achieve his or her goals.** With strong knowledge of a person's psychological, physical, emotional, sensory, cognitive, and social makeup, occupational therapists can evaluate how your child's condition (or risk for one) is affecting his or her participation in life and provide ways to overcome any barriers while using a holistic perspective.

Find more information
and resources at
www.aota.org!