

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:

Self-care	Getting dressed and preparing and eating meals.
Productivity	Going to or remaining in work, volunteering, studying, or caring for others.
Leisure	Playing sports, shopping with friends, or doing hobbies.



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 to find a local independent occupational therapist.

*Social Care and Health Department of your local council in Scotland
*Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland

College of Occupational Therapists Limited
The UK professional body for occupational therapy staff

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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 may include self-care (getting ready to go out or eating a meal), being productive (going to work or volunteering), and leisure (socialising with friends or doing hobbies).

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Here are ways that occupational therapists can support you living in a care home:

Daily activities

Accepting help with daily activities may mean gradually losing skills to look after yourself.

An occupational therapist can explore what you want to do and give advice and set realistic goals to help you to look after yourself. Staff will be advised how to support you.

Getting out and about

The risk of falls or fear of falling can mean that you are limited in doing the things you enjoy.

An occupational therapist can support you and your care team to consider what you want to do and provide advice on reducing your risk of having a fall. An occupational therapist may suggest changes to the layout of your care home, and give guidance

on equipment, adaptations or exercise to build your confidence, balance and muscle strength.

Dining

Some people lose interest in food as they get older and find eating tiring or difficult.

An occupational therapist may observe you eating to assess how you handle your cutlery and to see if improvements can be made to make eating easier. If your lack of appetite is due to depression or dementia, an occupational therapist may advise on a change of environment, eating with different people, or serving smaller portions.

Socialising

Enjoying other people's company can be dependent on comfortable seating.

An occupational therapist can assess your seating posture to ensure you are safe when seated. The occupational therapist may suggest a special anti-slide cushion or a chair that tilts that combines comfort and stability.

Personal routine

Balancing individual needs with the routine of others can be a challenge. Restless behaviour may mean it is difficult to join in activities.

An occupational therapist can work with you, your relatives, and staff to identify why you feel restless and recommend activities that interest you, playing to your strengths and abilities.



Living well through activity in care homes: the toolkit



The College of Occupational Therapists' *Living Well Through Activity in Care Homes Toolkit* is a **FREE** online resource with dedicated sections for residents, their family and friends; care home managers and staff. It offers practical ideas, help and advice to increase participation in meaningful activity for older people in care homes.

Download the toolkit and view the film "Choosing the right care home"
COT.org.uk/living-well-care-homes