

## What is an Occupational Therapist?

Occupational therapists (OTs) provide assessment and intervention to support an individual's participation in everyday meaningful activities. OTs work directly with individuals who have Down Syndrome and other developmental disabilities, along with their families, schools, and community supports, to develop independence in fine and gross motor skills, address sensory needs, support transitions, and increase functional life skills. OTs prioritize holistic, person and family-centered care, while focusing on helping individuals gain independence, meaning and satisfaction through the lifespan.



## How Can Occupational Therapy Help?

OTs provide education, advocacy and support to the individual, the family, and community to maximize the fit between the person, occupation, and environment to facilitate success and increase engagement.

**PERSON** = physical, cognitive, emotional, cultural

**OCCUPATION** = task, demands, routine

**ENVIRONMENT** = physical, socioeconomic, cultural, social



## Occupational Therapy: 3 Areas of Intervention

### SELF CARE

Involves activities for taking care of one's self, such as feeding, sleeping, toileting, hygiene, getting dressed.

### PRODUCTIVITY

Involves productive activities to contribute to and feel a part of the community, such as going to school, doing housework, volunteering, and employment.

### LEISURE

Involves activities to enjoy life, such as socializing, hobbies, leisure activities, reading and gardening.

## How Can Occupational Therapy Help?

The following are examples of occupational therapy goals for individuals with Down Syndrome. Goals can be changed to meet the individual's current needs and continue to be supported across the lifespan.

### Medical Support

- Support a healthy sleep routine and the management of sleep apnea (*e.g. CPAP desensitization*)
- Advocate for medical equipment (*e.g. toileting, bathing, feeding*) and seating (*e.g. activity chairs*)
- Equipment adherence (*learning to wear eyeglasses, hearing aids and masks*)
- Help create and maintain healthy diet and lifestyle

### Early Years

#### Self Care

- Introducing dressing, grooming and pre-toileting skills
- Learning to safely self-feed and increase variety of tastes and textures
- Assess and prescribe needed care equipment (*e.g. toileting equipment, seating, feeding*)

#### Productivity

- School readiness skills (*e.g. circle time, school routines, table readiness and transitions*)
- Support pre-printing skills (*e.g. letter/number recognition, drawing lines and shapes*)

#### Leisure

- Develop play skills (*e.g. matching, manipulating toys, completing puzzles, problem solving*)
- Increase ability to access playground equipment safely



### School Age

#### Self Care

- Create a toileting routine/plan for home and school
- Support schools to manage child's sensory needs in the school environment

#### Productivity

- Provide consultation in development of an individualized education plan (IEP)
- Provide in-service education for teachers and education assistants
- Recommend occupational and environmental adaptations (*e.g. seating, sensory diets, writing & cutting tools*)

#### Leisure

- Support schools to provide inclusive play and social opportunities
- Participate in extra-curricular activities in the community (*e.g. riding a bike*)



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## Teenage Years

### Self Care

- Provide education for puberty hygiene management
- Develop mental health management strategies

### Productivity

- Develop life skills (*e.g. telling time, calendar use, navigation, typing etc.*)
- Improve executive functioning skills (*memory, attention, and organization*)

### Leisure

- Assess and provide adaptive equipment needed to play sports and other leisure activities
- Develop gross motor strength, balance, motor planning and coordination



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## Young Adults

### Self Care

- Post-Secondary transition  
(*e.g. increasing home independence skills, provide supportive housing resources*)

### Productivity

- Support work readiness skills for volunteering and/or employment
- Educate employers on how to integrate assistive technologies into the workplace

### Leisure

- Support with identifying and accessing community social and recreation resources
- Set up daily routines with engaging and meaningful activities



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## Older Adults

### Self Care

- Assess and prescribe home supports (*e.g. shower equipment, mobility aids*)
- Support family and caregivers to create a care plan for physical and cognitive needs

### Productivity

- Support continued participation in community  
(*e.g. modify work demands, connect with new volunteer or peer-mentoring opportunities*)

### Leisure

- Facilitate opportunities for active recreation for health maintenance
- Modify home environment for continued independence and aging in place



For more information on how OT can help please contact DSRF Occupational Therapists:

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