



HOW CAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELP YOU?

Occupational therapy is about enabling people to do the things they need and want to do.

Activities involved with self-care, leisure, and work can become difficult with an arthritis condition. Struggling to do tasks that enable us to remain independent can lead to increased anxiety, stress, and tension leading to increasing pain levels. An occupational therapist will assess your strengths and identify barriers that stop you participating in activities. They will put together a plan which may include equipment and aids, services, strategies, referrals, information, and resources to bridge the gap so you can find new ways of achieving tasks.

The do-it-yourself process



Step One: Analyse The Task

What specific tasks are difficult?

- Is it preparing food, transferring on/off the toilet or chair, showering, dressing, driving, stair climbing, hanging out the washing, or mobilising safely?

What factors are contributing to the problem?

- Environmental - is the toilet seat or chair too low, do the stairs need a handrail or lift?
- Physical capacity – is it due to tiredness, muscle weakness, stiffness, or pain?
- Task demands - does it take too long, is it too complicated?

Step Two: Find A Workable Solution

What equipment, strategies, or assistance could you put in place?

- Use equipment such as jar openers, ergonomic gardening tools, a raised toilet seat, a long-handled shoe horn, a walking stick, chair-raisers, or a clothes horse to manage jobs more easily. Equipment can be purchased through places like Mobility Centre or Independent Living Charitable Trust.
- Move furniture and kitchen items around to make them easier to access.
- Pace yourself and do a physically demanding activity in short bursts over a few days.
- Plan your week ahead of time so you don't over-do it.
- Become aware of posture and change your position regularly to reduce muscle tension & pain.
- Use work-around strategies like dragging heavy items rather than lifting or get assistance from someone who can help.



Need more help?

Government funded assistance

If you are a hospital in-patient, you may receive occupational therapy and be referred for ongoing treatment when you get home. Your GP can refer you to the hospital OT if you require equipment to keep you independent at home.

If you have a disability or age-related condition and need support to stay living independently at home, you can be assessed for government funded equipment and services through the NASC service.



How to access NASC services:

NASC (Needs Assessment Service & Co-ordination' service) are contracted by Health NZ to assess and co-ordinate funded services for:

- people with disabilities
- mental health issues
- older people needing age-related support (65+ years of age).

You can refer yourself or someone you know to NASC or get a referral through your health practitioner/GP. The referral needs to be in writing. A NASC assessor will come to your home to assess eligibility and co-ordinate support such as household management, personal cares, equipment and mobility aids, housing, and vehicle modifications.



Paying privately:

You can pay for an occupational therapist and arrange for them to visit you. They will assess your physical environment, observe you carrying out activities, talk to you about your personal history, and what your goals are.

Together you will create a plan of action. They will identify and provide interventions such as equipment, strategies, education, and community services to support you. Occupational therapists may specialise in areas such as activities of daily living, vehicle modifications, housing modifications, mental health, coaching and mentoring, older adult health, hand therapy, and rehabilitation.

You can find a therapist through the Occupational Therapy NZ website: <https://www.otnzwana.co.nz/find-an-occupational-therapist/>

ACC funded:

If you have an accident – particularly at work - ACC may refer you to an occupational therapist.

Visit [arthritis.org.nz](https://www.arthritis.org.nz), contact Arthritis Assist on 0800 663 463, or look for us on Social Media