

# OCCUPATION-BASED HAND THERAPY

## Getting back to the job of living

### HAND THERAPY

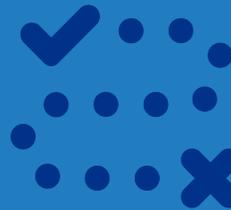
is a specialty area of Occupational Therapy concerned with treating orthopedic-based upper-extremity conditions to optimize the functional use of the hand and arm.

An occupational therapist (OT) who specializes in this area treats diagnoses that include **fractures** of the hand or arm, **lacerations** and **amputations**, **burns** and **surgical repairs** of tendons and nerves.

Conditions such as **tendonitis**, **rheumatoid arthritis** and **osteoarthritis**, and **carpal tunnel syndrome** are also treated by hand specialists.

### WHAT CAN AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST DO?

Hand therapy typically addresses the biomechanical issues underlying upper-extremity conditions. However, OTs bring an added dimension to this specialty area. They use an occupation-based and patient-centered approach that identifies the needs of that particular patient—what he or she wants to be able to do in daily life that is fulfilling and meaningful—and emphasizes getting back to these activities as the primary goal of therapy.



### FROM AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST'S PERSPECTIVE

#### SYMPTOMS

- Squeaking or creaking noises from your wrist caused by tendons rubbing against the muscles
- Swelling or redness around intersection point
- Pain in intersection point
- Pain which spreads down towards the thumb and up along the end of the forearm

#### OCCUPATION-BASED APPROACH TO HAND THERAPY

The patient-therapist relationship is key to an occupation-based approach. Occupational Therapy begins with a patient-centered assessment. The benefits of this is twofold:

- The therapist knows immediately what the patient values and enjoys, and what he or she needs to “get back to.”
- The patient will understand that therapy is addressing his/her whole body, mind, and lifestyle.

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### Benefits of Occupation-based Hand Therapy:

Evidence shows that people view themselves in relation to their occupational abilities and roles (Hasselkus, 2002).

Injuries and conditions that interfere with life roles, habits, time use, activity patterns, occupational experiences, and full participation will create a sense of dysfunction and yearning for normalcy (Hasselkus, 2002). Incorporating “usually and customary” occupational activities into treatment and focusing goals on being able to perform those activities offer many benefits to patients, including:

- Preserving roles and habits, as well as related psychological well-being, through attention to details of day-to-day activities early in the rehabilitation process
- Increasing motivation for therapy and more cost-effective rehabilitation
- Making the patient a partner in his/her rehabilitation

### Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy



### Outcomes:

The ultimate goal of Occupation-based Hand Therapy is to ensure that the rehabilitation process promotes healing while also enabling the patient to perform the activities of daily living.

This approach fosters positive outcomes for patients, including:

- Enhancing their satisfaction with the therapy experience and results
- Maintaining the ability to participate in family and community life
- And, most importantly, experiencing quality of life as they define it

(American Occupational Therapy Association, 2002).



American Occupational Therapy Association (2002). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process. Bethesda MD: Author.

Amini, D. (24). Renaissance occupational therapy and occupation-based hand therapy. *OT Practice*, 9(3), 11-15.

Hasselkus, B. (2002). The meaning of everyday occupation. Thorofare, NJ: Slack.

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