

# Occupational therapy

Occupational therapy plays a crucial role in supporting individuals with Parkinson's. It empowers people with Parkinson's to adapt, engage in meaningful activities, and have better quality of life despite the challenges posed by the condition.

## What do OTs do?

Accessing an occupational therapist (OT) can significantly enhance the quality of life for someone living with Parkinson's.

Occupational therapists specialise in helping individuals to participate in daily activities (also referred to as 'occupations') that are meaningful and necessary for their everyday lives.

For someone with Parkinson's, this support is crucial due to the progressive nature of the condition, which can affect physical movement, coordination, and cognitive functions.

## Holistic assessment

OTs conduct holistic individual assessments, considering physical, cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors. They can then tailor interventions to the specific needs, goals and values of each person living with Parkinson's to address their specific symptoms.

## Maintaining independence

OTs help individuals maintain their independence by addressing daily living activities like personal care, driving and communicating. They provide strategies to overcome difficulties in tasks such as bathing and dressing, accessing the community, housework, laundry and gardening. See Personal care infosheet.

## Home modifications

Occupational therapists assist in modifying the home environment to enhance safety and accessibility. This may include recommending adaptive equipment, rearranging furniture, or suggesting changes to improve mobility. See Parkinson's-friendly homes infosheet.

## Communication devices

For those experiencing communication challenges, occupational therapists can introduce augmentative and alternative communication devices (such as iPads or dictation Apps on smartphones). See Communication infosheet.

## Hand therapy

Occupational therapists address hand dexterity and fine motor skills. They provide exercises and techniques to improve hand function, which can be affected in Parkinson's.

## Driving

Occupational therapists guide individuals through the process of transitioning out of driving if necessary. They explore alternative transportation options and help maintain mobility. See Driving and Driving alternatives infosheets.

## Preventative care

Occupational therapy emphasises preventive measures. Therapists educate individuals on energy conservation, fall prevention, and maintaining overall well-being. They can help with personal safety devices like personal alarm systems and how to use them. See Falls and Fatigue infosheets.

## Fall prevention

Through home safety assessments and recommendations, OTs can help reduce the risk of falls by suggesting modifications to the home environment and personalised exercise programs to improve balance and strength. See Falls and Parkinson's-friendly homes infosheets.

## Cognitive support

Occupational therapists can provide strategies to manage cognitive changes associated with Parkinson's, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving difficulties. See Memory & thinking changes infosheet.

## Fatigue management

OTs can assist in energy conservation techniques and time management strategies to help manage the fatigue often associated with Parkinson's. See Fatigue infosheet.

## Workplace modifications

For those still in employment, OTs can recommend changes to the work environment and work practices to accommodate their needs, ensuring they can continue working for as long as possible. See Parkinson's-friendly workplaces infosheet.

## Leisure and social participation

OTs can help individuals with Parkinson's find new ways to engage in leisure activities or adapt existing hobbies to maintain an active and fulfilling social life.

## Why should I go to an OT?

OTs that have experience working with people living with Parkinson's will be able to provide practical solutions to challenges and barriers you may be experiencing. They can help you identify and build on your strengths, adapt activities you love so you can stay engaged, and modify your environment at home or work so you can keep doing what you value most, safely.

## How do I access an OT?

Accessing occupational therapy services can make a significant difference in managing the symptoms of Parkinson's, improving quality of life and maintaining independence.

It's advisable to explore all available pathways to find the support that best suits your individual needs. Look to:

- getting a GP referral to an OT with Parkinson's experience
- your state-based Parkinson's organisation for advice on OTs to access
- private health to see what is covered in relation to OT consultations and expenses
- NDIS or My Aged Care plan supports.

Infosheet kindly reviewed by Occupational Therapy Australia.

To find an OT go to: [www.otaus.com.au](http://www.otaus.com.au)

