



Pediatric Occupational Therapy

When to refer to an occupational therapist

Pediatric occupational therapy aims to help children to participate in their daily life activities and focuses on helping children to develop the skills they need to grow into functional, independent adults.

Pediatric occupational therapy addresses:

- **Cognitive Skills:** executive functioning (working memory, planning, organization, attention). Children with cognition challenges may have trouble remembering their letters, shapes, and numbers.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** finger dexterity, hand strength, fine manual control, immature grasp, manipulating small objects, handwriting, using utensils (fork, spoon). Children with fine motor challenges may have illegible handwriting, write slowly, or may avoid toys with small pieces.
- **Motor Planning Skills:** visualizing, sequencing, and executing a plan. Children with motor planning challenges may stick to one familiar game or idea, may appear fearful or unwilling to do something novel or that they may have done before, may have trouble learning a new skill, or may require assistance to complete age appropriate tasks.
- **Self-Care Skills:** dressing (shoe tying), self-feeding (utensil use), bathing (teeth brushing). Children with self-care challenges may depend on a parent or caregiver more than they should for their age to complete these tasks.
- **Social Interactions Skills:** taking turns, listening, following directions, social problem solving, emotional regulation. Children with social skill challenges may have a hard time playing with others appropriately and following directions from others.
- **Visual Processing Skills (visual motor Integration skills, visual perceptual skills):** hand-eye coordination, copying. Children with visual motor challenges may have a hard time copying from the board onto their paper or telling the difference between two objects.
- **Information Processing Skills:** addresses sensory systems that may impact attention, regulation, and can impact learning. These children may be over- or under-responsive to visual, auditory, tactile, vestibular, and/or proprioceptive stimuli. Children with sensory processing disorders or challenges with sensory stimuli may have reactions to loud noises or hold objects too tight. This includes feeding therapy for picky eaters and problem feeders.
- **Sensory Integration Skills:** therapy that aims to help children with sensory processing issues or disorders by exposing them to sensory stimuli in a structured, repetitive way.
- **Emotional Regulation Skills:** recognizing emotions, developing strategies to help return to a regulated state. Children with emotional regulation challenges may move from one emotion to another very quickly or may require assistance to calm after having big feelings.
- **Feeding Skills:** picky eating/problem feeding, eating limited numbers of food due to sensory aversions. Children with feeding challenges may only eat crunchy or chewy foods, avoid pureed foods, or prefer foods from one brand.