

Patty's PT Tips

Patty's PT Tips

October 18, 2023

The Occupational Therapist's Skillset in Managing MS

Definition of "Occupation"- The everyday activities that we do as individuals, in families and with communities to occupy time and provide meaning and focus in our everyday lives.

Self-care Activities—including functional mobility, dressing, bathing, grooming and eating

Productive Activities—including paid work, home management, caregiving and volunteer activities

Leisure Activities—including involvement in social and recreational pursuits
Occupational therapy services may include:

- assisting with routine daily activities, like showering, cooking, and getting dressed
- assessing your home and work environment to identify potential hazards and to create a more functional environment that suits your needs
- recommending special equipment or assistive devices for use at home, school, or work
- showing you how to properly use adaptive equipment, like orthotics, braces, or wheelchairs
- helping with budgeting, scheduling, and daily planning
- working with schools or workplaces to ensure you're meeting your goals
- recommending exercises to strengthen fine motor skills, coordination, and mental alertness
- teaching you skills for stress management

How occupational therapy helps patients with MS:

Occupational therapy can help you learn how to care for yourself when living with MS. Below are some examples of how you can benefit.

Help with day-to-day activities:

One of the main goals of occupational therapy is to help you lead a more independent life. When you have MS, even routine activities can be challenging. An occupational therapist can give you the tools you need to perform day-to-day tasks more efficiently. This includes:

- showering
- using the bathroom
- working
- taking medications
- driving
- cleaning
- getting dressed
- grooming
- meal prep
- cleaning
- laundry
- hobbies

This is especially important when the symptoms of MS affect your memory, concentration, and organization, or make you constantly fatigued.

Teaching you how to conserve energy:

One of the biggest challenges for people living with MS is energy conservation. Exerting yourself or becoming physically exhausted can be disabling if you have MS. It could cause your MS to flare, or could make a flare worse. This is a concern because it's not always possible to recover from the damage caused by a flare.

Occupational therapists can help people with MS learn to use their energy and abilities in ways that are beneficial, not harmful. An occupational therapist can also help you identify tools and techniques that will help to simplify tasks and reduce the burden on your body.

Setting up adaptive devices at work, school, and home

One of the most important tasks of an occupational therapist is to evaluate how you interact with your work, school, and home environment. The therapist can then identify ways to improve these interactions based on your personalized needs.

There are hundreds of different adaptive or assistive technologies and gadgets available to promote independence. Your occupational therapist can recommend which ones will help you the most.

Examples of adaptive and assistive devices that could help someone with MS include:

- wheelchairs, canes, and walkers
- bathroom equipment, like grab bars, to prevent falls
- devices that improve driving safety and comfort
- weighted utensils to counteract tremors
- a “reacher” tool for picking up items off the floor
- reading and writing aids, like pencil grips
- jar openers
- visual aids, like magnifying readers
- computer screen reader software