Occupational therapy and Pain management

Occupational therapy can help you to manage pain

Occupational therapy
Helping people to live life their way
Occupational therapy can help you to cope with pain

Experiencing chronic pain is very common. Pain can occur anywhere in your body, at any age, and be caused by a variety of health conditions. It can affect all aspects of your life – how you move, think, sleep, feel, and carry out everyday activities. It is a very personal experience and how you experience pain affects how you deal with it and the impact it has on you. If pain stops you from doing activities you need or want to do, you will probably feel frustrated and low, and unfortunately this can exacerbate the pain.

Occupational therapists can help you to carry out activities despite experiencing pain

An occupational therapist can:

- Advise on planning, pacing and prioritising your activities
- Provide assistive equipment, if needed
- Suggest techniques to help you to conserve energy, and provide advice on caring for your muscles and joints

What do occupational therapists do?

An occupational therapist uses their professional expertise in understanding how the body works when doing everyday activities and tasks.

Following a detailed assessment, the occupational therapist can apply problem-solving techniques to enable you to manage your pain, and break the cycle of thinking about it, so you can continue with activities that you enjoy and need to do.
An occupational therapist can help you to:

**Remain active**

An occupational therapist will:
- Assess your pain and learn about your interests and usual routines to build up your stamina gradually, so you can carry on with your daily activities
- Help you to schedule your activities to include periods of rest
- Demonstrate techniques to help you overcome pain whilst remaining active
- Show you how to use assistive equipment and technology

**Improve your back care**

An occupational therapist will:
- Help you develop strategies for bending, lifting and reaching
- Provide advice on how to incorporate exercise and relaxation into your daily life

**Relax and sleep**

An occupational therapist will:
- Suggest alternatives to medication to induce sleep such as tried and tested relaxation techniques

**Cope with continuous pain**

An occupational therapist will:
- Develop a daily routine with you to help you to prioritise your activities
- Provide coping strategies such as distraction techniques and visual imagery
- Identify activities that you enjoy or find relaxing, which may ease the pain you are experiencing

**Return to work**

An occupational therapist will:
- Undertake an assessment to gauge the activities you can do comfortably at work
- Develop new strategies to enable you to increase your stamina
- Advise you on overcoming pain-causing hazards at work
- Recommend assistive technology and alternative ways of working
An occupational therapist can help you to:
What is an occupational therapist?
Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who help people of all ages – babies, children, adults and older people to carry out activities they need or want to do, but are prevented from doing so as a result of physical or mental illness, disability or the affects of ageing. Activities can include the necessities of daily living such as getting dressed, preparing a meal, going to work, or simply continuing with a favourite hobby. Occupational therapists will work with individuals to help them to find alternative ways to carry on with activities to enable them to live life their way.

An occupational therapist can:
● Provide advice and training in undertaking daily activities such as bathing, dressing, eating and participating in a favourite hobby
● Help people with work-related stress to re-prioritise tasks to improve their work–life balance
● Assess and recommend equipment such as mobility aids, wheelchairs and artificial limbs and, if needed, advise on special devices to help around the home, school or in the workplace
● Support people to remain in or return to work

How to contact an occupational therapist
Ask your GP, nurse, or other health or social care professional to refer you to an occupational therapist.

To find an occupational therapist in your area, visit:

www.COT.org.uk
Telephone: 0800 389 4873

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