Dementia Care Guide

Occupational Therapy in Dementia Care

What is Occupational Therapy?
Occupational Therapy (OT) is a healthcare specialty that works with people of all ages, diagnoses, and abilities to help them remain independent in the activities they want or need to do to live a happy and meaningful life.

How Can OT Help People With Dementia?
OTs use their knowledge and experience of working with older adults to:

• Train family, caregivers, or people with dementia on what to expect with the progression of dementia.
• Evaluate a person’s function, home environment, and family supports to determine strengths and weaknesses and make suggestions for changes.
• Adapt environments and activities to the needs of the person, to help people with dementia live independently for as long as possible.

Caregiver Challenges
Being a caregiver of someone with dementia can be very challenging.

• The increased demands of caring for a loved one can lead the caregiver to experience anxiety, stress, burnout, or depression.
• The leading predictor of placement into assisted living or a nursing home is caregiver depression.
• The health of loved ones with dementia is strongly related to the well-being of their caregiver.

For helpful local and national resources for caregivers of people with dementia, view the complete Dementia Care: Decision Tree & Guide by visiting: http://alliedhealth.lsuhs.edu/ot
Click Dementia Decisions on the right side of the screen.

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The Importance of Daily Tasks When Making Decisions About Care

For people with dementia, quality of life can be affected by the ability to do daily tasks. Basic activities of daily living include self-care tasks such as feeding, bathing, dressing, and using the toilet. More complex tasks needed to live independently include managing money, cooking a meal, cleaning the house, and taking medicines correctly.

Changes in behavior and function can happen quickly in people with dementia, leading to the inability to perform even basic daily tasks and self-care. For this reason, it is important to monitor changes in daily function to ensure the safety of someone with dementia.

Help Your Loved One Stay Home Longer: Prevent Falls

Safety in the home is directly related to falls.
- Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults.
- One-third of Americans age 65 or older have a fall each year.
- Fear of falling may cause people to limit activities and social participation. This can result in further physical decline and feelings of helplessness.

What can you do to prevent falls in the home?
- Remove things that can cause falls from hallways, stairs, and frequently walked areas.
- Install handrails in bathrooms.
- Increase the amount of lighting in the home.
- Remove rugs
- Keep frequently used items in cabinets that can be easily reached or keep items out on countertops.
- Install ramps to eliminate falls on stairs.
- Ask your doctor to recommend an occupational therapist to complete a home safety assessment.

LSU Health Sciences Center
Occupational Therapy Dept., New Orleans
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