

Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapists help you to learn new ways of doing things

Occupational Therapists (or OTs) help you with tasks that you find difficult and help you to discover new, easier ways of growing your skills. Your OT is likely to focus on reducing discomfort, increasing social connection and independence. This could be anything from self-care activities (i.e. showering or dressing), to spending time with your friends. Occupational Therapists have either an undergraduate or master's degree and must be registered with AHPRA (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency) to support people in Australia.

An OT can come to your home, where you work, or anywhere else you regularly visit to see how you use the space and make some recommendations. They could recommend new techniques, altering equipment you already have, or new equipment that could help you. Sometimes these are expensive, but sometimes they can be found at supermarkets or department stores.

All OT's are different. Some may be great for your friends and family but may not be right for you.

Some people find meeting a new therapist or health professional hard. It is important to remember that it can take time to build a relationship where you trust your health therapists.

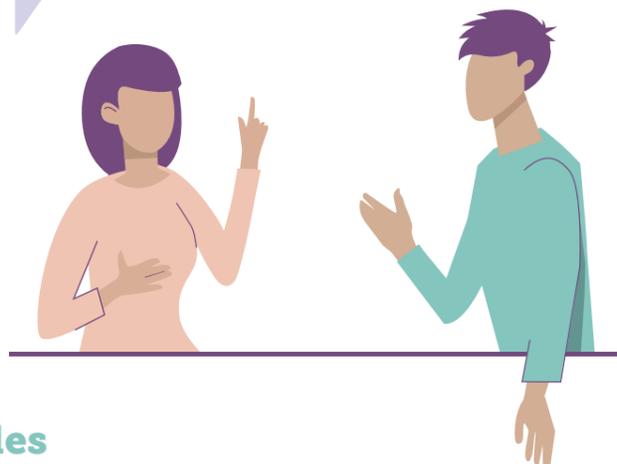
They all have different personalities, experiences, and expertise. They might specialise in physical disability, intellectual disability, or working with children. It is important to choose an OT that you trust to truly understand you.

Here are some questions that might help you choose your OT:

- > Are you registered with AHPRA?
- > What is your experience working with people with my disability?
- > Will you talk to my other professionals (i.e. doctor) to develop a plan that considers all the different parts of my life?
- > Do you offer home or community visits?
- > How often do you think I will need to see you?
- > Will you set goals with me?
- > Will you consider my NDIS goals in your assessment?

Wow, you wrote your presentation really quickly

I know, my OT recommended a special keyboard that is easier for me to use and my NDIS plan paid for it. It helps a lot



What an OT report usually includes

An OT report might be helpful in your NDIS planning or review meeting. A good report might mean the right amount of funding and some assistive technology, but a poor quality report might mean you don't get enough supports to live your life independently.

When it is time for your plan review, make sure your OT writes a report of the work you have done together. You may need to remind them as they often have a lot of clients.

Good reports;

- > Make clear recommendations for funding, including expected outcomes
- > Relate the recommendations to your NDIS goals
- > Use language the NDIS uses, such as "reasonable and necessary"
- > Provide evidence for any requested funding of hours, assistive technology, and adapted products
- > Show the progress you have made during your current NDIS plan

How your Occupational Therapist can help with NDIS planning and review meetings

Your OT can produce a report based on your progress toward the goals in your NDIS plan. This might be as a formal assessment or an update report for the NDIA and can request different or additional equipment that you need.

It is unlikely that you will need your OT to come to your review meeting, however, if you have a lot of equipment needed you can ask them to attend with you to explain these to the planner. You will have to pay for this.

What Occupational Therapists can (and can't) do for you

- ✓ An OT can recommend equipment that the NDIS can pay for
- ✓ An OT will assess one area of your life per assessment (i.e. work, school, or home)
 - Your OT may watch you do some tasks to understand your needs
- ✗ You may not get everything your OT recommends if it is not explained well to the NDIA
- ✗ Your OT will not recommend equipment you want if you do not need it

Your rights and entitlements

- > You are entitled to an interpreter to make sure you understand what is being said. There can be many questions, talking, and explaining during an OT assessment. If an interpreter is needed for a family member or carer, explain that this is important so that they can be involved in the conversation, and can support you to follow up on advice.
 - The OT may be able to bring an interpreter with them, but sometimes you may have to organise this yourself.
 - You can ask to have any reports or documents translated for you or your primary carer.
- > You are entitled to the support and care of a trustworthy professional who will work with you to reach your goals.
- > If your OT report is missing key information - such as goals - you have the right to ask the OT to change the report.

What is Telehealth?

You can ask your OT if you can have your appointment over the phone or on video. This is available for people who live far away, or cannot get to their appointments because of disability, mental health, or self-isolation.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, Telehealth became more common and available to more people in Australia.

Independent Assessments

The NDIA may ask you to participate in an independent assessment. The assessment will determine how much funding will be in your NDIA plan, based on your support needs. The assessor will be an allied health professional (e.g. OT, Physiotherapist, Social Worker) that has not worked with you before. The assessors are not employees of the NDIA. They work independently. The NDIA has developed this assessment to make sure everyone in the NDIS have an assessment of their needs, even if they cannot afford it themselves. The NDIA pays for the independent assessment.

Chronic Health Care Plan Entitlement

A Medicare card entitles you to 5 sessions with Allied health professionals that are subsidised by the Government. The 5 sessions can be all with 1 type of professional, or 1 session with 5 types of professionals. This can help to make seeing allied health more affordable. You will need to see your GP or doctor for a referral to a professional. This is called a Chronic Disease Management Plan.



START HERE

Steps for using an Occupational Therapist

1

Receive OT funding in your plan

2*

Find an OT that is confident with your support needs

3*

Share your NDIS plan, goals, preferences, and support needs with your OT

4

Meet your OT at your home or workplace

5

Practice the skills they teach you, and use any equipment they recommend

6*

Make sure the progress report they give you is correct and talks about your progress towards your goals

7*

NDIS review meeting

* If you have a Support Coordinator, they will organise these with you.

How to ask for Occupational Therapy in your NDIS plan

Many people ask for an OT assessment in their first or second plan. Some people have never had an assessment before, and some people have not had one for a very long time. If you think you need an assessment, ask the planner to include it - as well as Speech Therapy appointments - in your NDIS plan.

There are many reasons why a person may not use all of the funding in their NDIS plan. These include long waitlists for health therapists, or if you are sick and are not having your regular supports.

This is OK and doesn't mean you will get less money in your next plan. When you have your annual Plan Review, make sure that you tell your planner why you have some unspent money in your NDIS plan.

Making a complaint

If you are not happy with your OT's report, you can discuss it with your OT, or their manager.

If you are not happy with your OT, or how they are behaving, you can make a complaint to their manager, or the complaints officer within the organisation.

If you think that there has been a serious problem, or you are not happy with how the organisation has handled your complaint or concern, you have 3 options for complaints.

1. If you are making a complaint about the charges to your NDIS plan, or you believe they are not acting as an NDIS registered organisation should, you can complain to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission. It exists to support you with your concerns and to help improve services for all people with disability.

You can contact them on:

-  1800 035 544 TTY: 133 677 
-  contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au
-  www.ndiscommission.gov.au
-  NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
PO Box 210, Penrith, NSW, 2750

2. If you are not happy with how the NDIA has responded to a complaint you have made, you can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman. While they may not investigate all reports, they have the ability to investigate how the NDIS is working, and look into how they are responding to complaints including your complaint. They Ombudsman will ask for your NDIA complaint number.

You can contact them on:

-  1300 582 113 TTY: 131 450 
-  www.hcc.vic.gov.au
-  In-Person or by Mail: Level 26, 570 Bourke Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000. To make time for your visit, call 1300 582 113.

3. If you are making a complaint because you think the OT's behaviour puts other people at risk or is unsafe, you can make a complaint to AHPRA (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency). It can review an OT and their ability to practise.

You can contact them on:

-  1300 419 495 
-  www.ahpra.gov.au
-  AHPRA, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001



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