

Occupational Therapy & Parkinson's



Many people find occupational therapy helpful, especially when:

- Daily activities like dressing or cooking are harder to manage
- You have fallen or worry about falling
- Fatigue or thinking changes are affecting your daily routines
- Your writing is smaller or difficult to control
- Driving feels less safe or more stressful
- You want to stay involved in hobbies or activities you enjoy
- Work tasks take more time, energy or focus than before
- You want your home assessed for safety or guidance on changes for now or later

Occupational therapists help people keep doing activities they enjoy and handle daily tasks in practical ways that work for them. They can offer support at any point in your Parkinson's disease (PD) journey.

Quick Facts

- Parkinson's can make daily routines more challenging over time.
- Occupational therapists can show you ways to adapt activities and your surroundings to make everyday tasks safer and easier.
- Starting occupational therapy early can help you stay independent longer.

What Occupational Therapist Do

Occupational therapists look at how Parkinson's affects your daily life — from everyday tasks to staying active in your community. They focus on practical approaches that support safety, comfort and independence in the activities that matter most to you.

Your occupational therapist will:

1. Understand your lifestyle

This includes learning about your routines, strengths and priorities to help you set meaningful goals.

2. Identify what's making tasks harder

Your therapist observes how you do daily activities and notes anything that makes them more difficult or less safe, such as movement changes, fatigue or the layout of your home.

3. Make a personalized plan

The plan helps you reach your goals. It may include changes to your home, such as creating safe pathways or adding grab bars. It may also include adapting how you do activities, such as sitting for safety or to save energy. Tools, technology, help from a care partner or a personal aide may also be part of the plan.

4. Test the plan and adjust

You try the strategies taught during therapy sessions in your daily life. Share what helps and what doesn't. Your therapist then adjusts the plan to better fit your needs and help you reach your goals.

Resources

Read, Watch & Listen:

- [Parkinson.org/Library](https://www.parkinson.org/Library) (search "occupational")
- [Parkinson.org/OccupationalTherapy](https://www.parkinson.org/OccupationalTherapy)

Parkinson's Therapy Programs

LSVT BIG

- [Lsvtglobal.com](https://www.lsvtglobal.com)

PWR!Moves

- [Pwr4life.org](https://www.pwr4life.org)

American Occupational Therapy Association

- [Aota.org](https://www.aota.org)

Helpline

For answers to your Parkinson's questions, contact our Helpline at **1-800-473-4636** or Helpline@Parkinson.org.

We are here for you.

Occupational Therapy Supports Care Partners

Occupational therapists work with care partners to find practical ways to support daily routines and shared goals. This may include learning how to offer help without taking over, using reminders or cues and practicing safe ways to assist with everyday activities.

How to Find an Occupational Therapist

Some occupational therapists have experience working with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions. Ask your care team for a referral, or contact the Parkinson's Foundation Helpline at **1-800-4PD-INFO** or Helpline@Parkinson.org for guidance.

If there isn't an occupational therapist with experience in Parkinson's nearby, many therapists are willing to learn. The Parkinson's Foundation offers online courses through the Learning Lab at [Education.Parkinson.org](https://www.parkinson.org/Education). Resources from the American Occupational Therapy Association and programs such as LSVT BIG or PWR!Moves can help your therapist build skills for Parkinson's care.

Most insurance plans, including Medicare, cover occupational therapy. A doctor's prescription may be required.

Occupational Therapy Locations

Therapy can take place in many settings, such as hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers or at home. Some occupational therapists offer in-home visits, which can sometimes be arranged after a hospital stay or through home health services if leaving your home is difficult.

Your Support Team

Occupational therapists often work with physical therapy, speech therapy and the other members of your care team. A team-based approach can help you stay active, safe and involved in what matters most to you.



Tips for Working with an Occupational Therapist

- **Set goals that matter to you.** Be open and honest about what's challenging and what you want to keep doing.
- **Check in once a year or as you notice changes.** It's easier to learn new strategies as your needs change than to try to adjust habits later on.
- **Lean on your therapist's recommendations.** They take the guesswork out of what to try next.