



## How **OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPY** Can Benefit All Ages



# How Occupational and Physical Therapy Can Benefit All Ages

Posted on [masmedicalstaffing.com](https://masmedicalstaffing.com)

It's no wonder that occupational and physical therapy play an important role in improving quality of life.

Have you ever pulled a muscle in your back? Or twisted an ankle? How about broken an arm?

The human body is incredibly strong and resilient.

However, there are numerous accidents, conditions, and birth defects that can significantly impede its functioning.

According to the [United States Department of Labor](#), each year, more than a million U.S. workers suffer back injuries. Annually, around 30 in every 100,000 people injure their knee.

Don't forget about head injuries, broken ribs, and other trauma to limbs or connective tissue. What's more: conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and heart and lung disease make movement painful and difficult.

In addition, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) states that each year, one in every 33 babies in the U.S. is born with a birth defect—Down Syndrome and cleft palate being among the most common.

Considering these statistics, why is it that the majority of people we see in our personal and private lives seem to be functioning just fine?

The answer is simple.

In the United States and in other developed countries, people have access to healthcare that helps them:

- recover,
- manage pain,
- and learn or improve their ability to function in daily life.

Physicians, surgeons, nutritionists, and other MDs are responsible for the first-line treatment.

However, occupational and physical therapy specialists are responsible for teaching people how to manage their injury or condition and live their lives.

Though many people think occupational therapists and physical therapists are the same, nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's take a look at each in more detail, and how they can benefit people of all ages.

---

## Occupational Therapists

An occupational therapist helps patients develop and improve the skills needed in daily life.

They also help patients manage sensory input. For example, when they're overly sensitive to light, sound, or touch. Their focus is on sensory processing, cognitive skills, and fine motor skills.

Occupational therapists treat patients of all ages:

### OT for Infants

According to [Birth Injury Guide](#), pediatric occupational therapists work with newborns and infants who have delayed development of their fine motor skills and self-care.

They also work with those whose sensory processing is challenged. Fine motor skills are necessary for actions such as grasping and coordination.

Delayed development of these skills can be indicated by limp muscle tone, hyper- or hyposensitivity, or a lack of dexterity.

Pediatric occupational therapists teach these infants to coordinate their movements and build their strength by means of exercises and stimulating toys.

Babies with challenged sensory processing are hypersensitive. Occupational therapists promote decreased sensitivity by means of activities that include touch, light, sound, and smell exercise.

---

## **OT for Children**

Occupational therapists help children with:

- injuries
- chronic conditions
- behavioral problems
- developmental or physical disabilities

This can include recovering coordination, learning basic tasks such as feeding themselves, managing pain, and learning how to use specialized equipment such as wheelchairs and communication aids.

It can also include improving concentration and managing emotions.

---

## **OT for Teens and Adults**

Occupational therapists can help patients recover or improve fine motor skills that have been affected by an injury or condition such as diabetes or cancer.

They also assess what physical aids patients may need and teach them how to use them.

Oftentimes, occupational and physical therapy helps workers who have been injured recover the strength and coordination they need to get back to work.

---

## **OT for Seniors**

Many seniors suffer a stroke or an age-related condition such as dementia, Alzheimer's, or loss of sight or hearing.

Occupational therapists help these patients recover their coordination and strength, often by means of exercises such as coloring or dexterity exercises.

They also help them adapt to functioning with impaired senses and teach them how to use equipment.

---

## **Physical Therapists**

Physical therapists help patients of all ages manage or heal from conditions or injuries that limit their daily functioning.

They also help patients after surgery, as well as older patients who are dealing with age-related conditions.

## **PT for Infants**

Some babies are born with conditions such as:

- spina bifida
- cerebral palsy

- neuromuscular disorders
- torticollis

Or, other conditions needing significant help learning motor skills, improving range of motion, and building strength.

**Physical therapists** create individualized treatment plans that can include exercises and games to improve motor skills and strength, as well as massages, muscle stretching, and heat and cold therapy.

---

## PT for Children

Physical therapists help children with:

- disabilities
- birth defects
- posture
- motor skills

If necessary, they teach them alternatives to regular actions. For example, if a child has no use of his hands.

They also help them improve muscle strength, something that's especially important for the developing body.

Exercises can include training equipment, as well as **plyometrics** and exercises in water.

---

## PT for Teens and Adults

Physical therapists help patients heal from injuries and recover strength and range of motion by means of dexterity, strength, and water exercises.

They also use massage, heat and cold therapy, ultrasound, and red light therapy to promote healing of the muscles and connective tissue.

---

## PT for Seniors

Elderly people often suffer from age-related conditions and injuries, such as:

- osteoporosis
- stroke
- hip replacement
- hernia

Physical therapists can help them recover their strength and range of motion, or develop alternative movements when an injury is too limiting.

They also play a large role in pain management by teaching patients exercises, stretches, and self-care practices that can ease pain, promote healing, and reduce the need for painkillers.

## Occupational and Physical Therapy for the Win

Both occupational and physical therapy play an important role in the overall health of the U.S. population.

It's also important to understand that there will be more and more in demand as the population ages, and an increasing number of people suffer from chronic conditions.

According to [the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), there will be job increase of 27 percent for occupational therapists between 2014 and 2024. For [physical therapists](#), that number is 34 percent.

That means that if you're considering becoming an occupational or a physical therapist, your future is bright!

Remember that you can gain valuable and diverse experience, earn a good salary, and see the world as a traveling occupational or physical therapist.

Deciding on your next adventure?

**FREE GUIDE**

**5 Top Places for Allied Health Travel Jobs in 2016**

**DOWNLOAD NOW >**

