



# Body, Mind & Spirit

## Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy (OT) is not only for adults. At Bay Area Rehabilitation Center (BARC), we also provide skilled therapy services to the pediatric population primarily ranging from ages 3-18. OT for kids typically involves the education of the parents on how to help their child at home and then the execution of fun and interesting activities designed to target and improve the specific skills children need to accomplish new things. OT for pediatrics can look a lot different than OT for adults, but fundamentally, it works in the same way. A skilled practitioner will assess the child for the things he/she does not do well as compared to their peers and then generate an individualized plan to try and meet the child and their families' needs with the goal to improve the child's abilities so that he/she may do more in life.

Are you wondering whether or not Occupational Therapy is something your child needs? Try contacting your child's pediatrician and letting him/her know the types of concerns you may have for your developing child. Common areas of concern include but are limited to:

- Difficulties with fine motor skills such as grasping for food, toys, and writing utensils
- Difficulties with hand eye coordination for activities such as throwing/catching, copying from a blackboard, manipulating tools/toys, etc.
- Difficulties with completing everyday tasks such as feeding, dressing, bathing, grooming, and potty training, etc.

- Difficulties with appropriate social interactions with their peers, caregivers as well as tolerating and participating in social activities in public environments such as school

- Difficulties with balance and gross motor coordination to participate in sports or other physical social activities such as tag/hide n seek, etc.

- Difficulties with emotional regulation, frustration tolerance, and excessive meltdown or tantrum behavior that prevents your child from doing things he/she wants to

- Difficulties with avoiding or seeking various sensory textures, sounds, smells, sights, etc. (Sensory processing can be a very intimidating domain to understand, but it loosely refers to how well your child can identify, integrate and then process the different senses/sensations experienced in any environment)

- Difficulties with needing specialized equipment in order to perform and participate at a higher level. Typically, includes things like wheelchairs, orthotic devices, dressing/bathing aids as well as communication boards and more

If your child is having issues with anything listed above, seek out his/her pediatrician to get more information.

Anyone who has children of their own or works closely with children should understand that they are very individual and have very individual needs. Each child is unique and has a unique set of barriers and limitations of physical, social, or cognitive origin

that need to be mitigated in order for them to have more success. Clients from all different types of diagnosis and backgrounds can qualify for OT services, but most commonly children with the following health issues are seen most frequently.

- Birth injuries or birth defects such as cerebral palsy, tethered cord, spina bifida, etc.
- Genetic disorders or chromosomal abnormalities such as Down's syndrome, Fragile X, NF, Muscular dystrophy, etc.
- Sensory processing disorders and abnormalities.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's and other social behavior issues such as OCD, ADHD, etc.
- Developmental delays and missed milestones
- Systemic chronic health conditions such as juvenile RA, MS, etc.
- Children can also be affected by similar musculoskeletal injuries as adults and children often require OT for things such as bone breaks, burns, post-surgical intervention, amputations, cancer, and hand injuries.

Children may require treatment for very variable durations of time ranging from just a few weeks or months to multiple years depending on the severity of their limitations. However, there will be a collaborative process between your therapist, your doctor, and the rest of the healthcare team to make an effort to make the most progress in the shortest amount of time. Occupational therapy can be a huge positive impact in a child's life and can mean all of the difference between someone living part of their and someone living all of their life.

Information from this scholarly article was used in this resource guide.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5490458/>

*Bill Juch is a licensed OT practitioner that specializes in both pediatric and adult outpatient rehabilitation services. He completed his bachelors of science in Biology at the Univer-*

sity of Texas at Austin in 2012, and went to finish his Masters of Science in Occupational Therapy at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston in 2014. He has garnered experience treating children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and associated sensory processing deficits as well as individuals with upper quadrant orthopedic injuries. Bill's drive to become an Occupational Therapist is derived from his experience of severely injuring his left hand as an adolescent. He was very lucky to work with an outstanding therapist that was able to bring back his hand function. Now, Bill hopes to help others just as he was helped out in the past, and to inspire others to reach out and lend a hand to those in need. Bill is interested in research on how 3D printing technology can be applied to create and fit custom orthotics, as well as how telemedicine and therapy can be used to increase access to healthcare for the less fortunate and to improve patient outcomes across the world. ♦



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