

how occupational therapists help the elderly

By Anne Marie Moran, RN



Occupational therapists (OTs) combine mental, physical, and psychological exercises to help patients perform everyday activities such as driving, dressing, eating, and even walking. They work with children and adults with disabilities, mental health issues, or injuries that affect physical and cognitive capabilities. Occupational therapy can be particularly important for geriatric patients. OTs working with our care

teams at VNSNY CHOICE and The Eddy Visiting Nurse Association often help with:

1. Tackling arthritis. By assisting with home and workplace modifications, occupational therapists can help seniors with arthritis continue to perform tasks normally. For example, patients who experience difficulty using their hands due to joint inflammation are often helped by learning how to use their hands differently or find more comfortable positions.

2. Range of movement. OTs provide helpful techniques to assist patients with range of motion strategies, thereby decreasing pain and stiffness. Exercises may vary depending upon a patient's condition and needs.

3. Improving vision. With help from OTs using exercises for the eyes and brain, the elderly may be able to improve problems such as double vision, lazy eye, balance, dizziness, strabismus, and reading.

4. Improving memory and cognitive skills. OTs can help patients retain and sharpen their memory and cognitive skills.

5. Coping with chronic pain. OTs assist patients experiencing chronic pain due to aging bones and joints, nerve damage, and traumatic injuries.

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