

Occupational Therapy Checklist: Does my child need OT?

If your child is exhibiting 3 or more of these characteristics, OT interventions may be helpful.

Infant/Toddler

- Low muscle tone; seems weak or floppy
- Difficulty self-calming, unusually fussy
- Unable to bring hands together and bang toys or bring toys to mouth
- Does not roll over (7 months), sit unsupported (10 months), pull to stand (12 months), or walk (18 months)
- Not self-feeding finger foods by 14 months
- Failure to explore, or consistently uses only one hand
- Cries or becomes tense when lifted/carried
- Frequent fisting of hands after 6 months
- Difficulty tolerating a prone (on stomach) position
- Does not play purposefully with age-appropriate toys
- Dislikes being held, cuddled, or touched
- Difficulty drinking from a bottle or eating solid foods
- Overly active, seeks excessive movement via rocking, jumping, or climbing
- Unable to settle down, sleep difficulties
- Not making eye contact
- Has a known medical diagnosis such as Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, a brachial plexus injury, or premature birth.



Preschooler

- Says "I can't" or "I won't" to age-appropriate play or self-care activities
- Low muscle tone; seems weak or floppy
- Clumsy, falls frequently
- Bumps into furniture or people, has trouble judging body in relation to space around her
- Overly fearful of jumping, swings, or having feet off the ground
- Dislikes coloring in lines, playing with fine motor toys, or cutting with scissors
- Does not color a picture, complete a simple inset puzzle, or attempt to imitate lines and circles
- Difficulty coordinating hands for effective toy play such as stacking blocks or stringing beads
- Delayed language development
- Avoids eye contact and does not interact with peers
- Frequent drooling, or mouth is always open
- Overly active, unable to slow down, moves quickly from one toy to another
- Difficulty focusing attention, or over-focused and unable to shift to a new task
- Fixates on objects that spin or turn, becomes upset when repetitive play is disrupted
- Over-reacts to touch, taste, sounds, odors
- Avoids playground activities
- Unable to settle down, sleep difficulties
- Unusually upset with changes in routine
- Needs more practice than other children to learn new skills
- Has a known medical diagnosis such as Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or Cerebral Palsy.

Occupational therapy

begins with a child-specific evaluation based on parent/teacher concerns, and typically includes interview, standardized assessment, and play-based assessment to determine a child's needs. For the most part, OT should look like play! Occupational therapists are skilled at constructing "just-right challenges" to build on a child's strengths, creating opportunities for success to boost self-esteem while gently facilitating progressive skill development. There is an emphasis on family & team consultation to provide daily interventions that maximize the child's development & participation.



School-Age Child

- Needs more practice than peers to learn new skills
- Low muscle tone; tends to lean on arms or slump
- Dislikes handwriting, tires quickly during written work
- Overly fearful of jumping, swings, or having feet off the ground
- Writes with unusually light or heavy pressure on a pencil
- Poor or awkward pencil grasp
- Reverses letters such as b and d; unable to space letters on the line
- Inaccurately copies letters or designs
- Difficulty using a computer
- Overly active, unable to slow down
- Difficulty focusing attention, or over-focused and unable to shift to a new task
- Over-reacts to touch, taste, sounds, odors
- Poor self-esteem, lack of confidence
- Uncoordinated scissor skills
- Avoids physical education or sports
- Requires extra time or effort for clothing fasteners or shoe-tying
- Difficulty paying attention or following instructions
- Difficulty following several step instructions for new physical tasks
- Has a known medical diagnosis such as Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, or Cerebral Palsy; or has an Individualized Education Plan at school.