

# Day-to-Day with Parkinson's, an Occupational Therapist Can Help

*Written By: Brandi La Bonte*

*Puzzle created by: Connie Luu, OT*



Occupational therapists (also known as OTs) can be an excellent resource for individuals living with Parkinson disease or Parkinson's Plus Syndromes. Whether you are having difficulty with your handwriting, experiencing cognitive changes, or having difficulties with self-care or even home management, occupational therapists can work with you to solve these problems so that you can continue doing these tasks in a way that is satisfying and meaningful to you. Similar to other members of your Parkinson's Care Team, occupational therapists help to promote independence, improve quality of life, and enable individuals to participate in meaningful and enjoyable activities.

By working with you, an occupational therapist will help you to identify your personal goals and tailor treatments to meet your unique needs. General goals of treatment sessions include goal setting, adapting



environments, removing barriers, modifying tasks, restoring existing skills, or developing new skills. In order to achieve your goals, an occupational therapist will encourage you to use a high level of conscious attention when performing various activities and may incorporate cognitive and sensory 'cues' that may help you perform activities and complete tasks more easily.

Manual dexterity is the most prevalent reason why people with Parkinson's will seek help from an occupational therapist. Primary concerns for a person with Parkinson's can include reduced coordination, decreased fluidity of movement, and delayed reaction time to name a few. In order to address these issues, an occupational therapist may encourage you to participate in task-specific training exercises (ie: through big, powerful movements) or they may promote adaptive alternatives such as weighted utensils, large buttons, or rocker knives to make daily activities easier.

Occupational therapists can also help manage Parkinson's symptoms including fatigue, cognitive concerns, communication problems, and anxiety.

If you are having concerns regarding accessibility and completion of day-to-day activities within your home, an occupational therapist can provide a home assessment and offer guidance on home adaptations or equipment purchases that can eliminate some of the challenges you are experiencing. They may suggest using mobility devices, different gadgets or strategies, or even practical changes such as how to rearrange your furniture that can make moving around easier.

Occupational therapists work in a variety of settings including hospitals, community health centres, clinics, and within a clients' home. Parkinson Association of Alberta is pleased to have Connie Luu, OT, on our Team to provide these services both in-person (in select locations) and online across Alberta. Occupational therapists can also be accessed through Alberta Health Services, the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Individuals can either self-refer or be referred by a doctor. Depending on the service provider, some fees may apply.



## OT Puzzle

1. Find all of the words - words can go in any direction and may share letters.
2. Copy unused letters starting from the top left corner to reveal the hidden message.

**If you are having difficulty with doing any of these activities independently or safely, you may benefit from:**

Budgeting

Gardening

Cooking

Handwriting

Dressing

Memory

Typing

Painting

Drinking

Reading

Driving

Shopping

Eating

Showering

Volunteering

Sleep

Fall Prevention

G	O	C	C	G	G	G	U	P	A	T	N	I	O	R
N	N	A	L	N	N	T	H	E	R	S	O	A	P	E
I	Y	Z	I	I	U	J	D	Y	H	K	I	X	G	A
S	N	T	P	K	B	Y	P	O	I	G	T	G	N	D
S	A	Y	O	O	R	K	P	O	N	G	N	Q	I	I
E	T	B	J	O	D	P	D	I	N	I	E	G	T	N
R	J	N	M	C	I	R	R	I	R	D	V	A	N	G
D	P	E	F	N	I	E	T	E	S	R	E	R	I	Q
V	M	D	G	N	W	I	E	G	C	I	R	D	A	P
H	Y	H	K	O	R	T	G	I	P	V	P	E	P	C
T	Z	I	H	W	N	C	A	C	E	I	L	N	F	W
A	N	S	D	U	O	F	S	A	E	N	L	I	M	V
G	N	N	L	K	X	T	O	C	L	G	A	N	K	T
O	A	O	Z	C	I	I	G	D	S	V	F	G	V	V
H	V	X	A	B	U	D	G	E	T	I	N	G	R	D