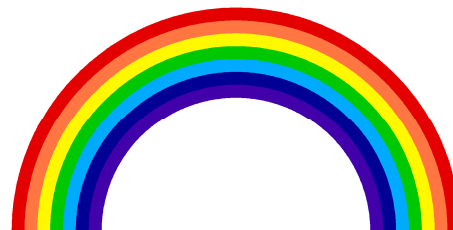


Occupational Therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic

A guide for patients and families



What is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational Therapy provides practical support to enable people to facilitate recovery and overcome any barriers that prevent them from doing the activities (occupations) that matter to them. This helps to increase people's independence and satisfaction in all areas of life (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2011).

How can Occupational Therapy help you?

Breathlessness and fatigue are commonly experienced while recovering from Covid-19. You might be deconditioned after a period of inactivity, particularly after being stepped down from intensive care. Your muscles are likely to be weaker than they were before. Occupational Therapy can provide support to manage these symptoms in the context of your daily activities, and help you to return to your normal level of independence. Equipment and adaptive techniques can be provided to assist with this.

Energy Conservation

Energy conservation is important to ensure that you use your energy wisely and have more energy for the things that are most important to you.

Principles of energy conservation –

Prioritising

- Identify meaningful tasks
- Setting goals
- Consider what tasks can be completed by others

This leaflet was compiled by NHS Lothian Occupational Therapy Services, April 2020. Approved by the Patient Information Team, May 2020.

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Anxiety management

Relaxation is a technique that could help calm your anxiety and allow you to regain control over your breathing. The first step in learning to relax is to become more aware of which parts of your body tense up when you are feeling anxious. Finding a way to relax is individual to every person. Before beginning any relaxation ensure you are in a comfortable position this can be lying or sitting. Here are a few suggestions-

- Listen to music
- Read a book
- Speak to friends, family or ward staff
- Mindfulness/meditation (there are several apps and resources to assist with this including Headspace)

Goal setting is an important part of rehabilitation. This should be done with the therapists involved in your care. It helps to give you something to aim for to gradually return to your usual level of activity. It is better to set smaller goals and review these regularly rather than large goals that may be harder to achieve. Goals can be adjusted throughout your rehabilitation.

If you have any concerns regarding your ability to return to work or regarding your financial situation there is help available via Citizen's Advice Bureau [0131 510 5510](tel:01315105510) or Working Health Services (you can self refer) [0131 537 9579](tel:01315379579)

Equipment

Equipment will only be provided by an Occupational Therapist in the hospital if considered essential for you. Equipment can be purchased privately from many disability shops locally, and online.

If you have not yet seen an Occupational Therapist during this admission and feel you would benefit from their input please highlight to a member of the ward team who can make a referral.

Planning

- Allows you to be in control
- Ensures that you don't waste energy unnecessarily
- Consider timing and movement to reduce unnecessary trips from room to room and up and down stairs
- Organise your home and work areas so that items used most frequently are close to hand
- Use a simple to do list/calendar

Pacing

- Allow yourself to take regular breaks during your daily activities and rest after meals
- Stop before you become overtired
- Break a task down into stages and do things one stage at a time
- Consider if you can do half a task today and half tomorrow
- Try not to rush. It's alright to slow down and take your time

Positioning

- Sit rather than stand during activities, if possible.
- Push or slide things rather than lifting them, if possible
- Push objects rather than pull them
- Avoid excessive twisting or bending, and try to bend at the knees rather than the waist
- Place a seat at the top and bottom of your stairs, if possible
- Always breathe out during the most strenuous part of an activity, i.e. as you lift an object or climb the stairs. If bending forwards, breathe out as you bend down and breathe in as you come back up.

Daily tasks

Self care

- Sit whilst washing, shaving, brushing teeth, drying hair, putting make up on
- Use an electric toothbrush/shaver
- Put on a towelling robe immediately after bathing/showering to soak up water rather than using heavy towels

Dressing

- Sit while dressing
- Use dressing aids to reduce bending down
- Choose loose fitting clothing with front fastenings that are easier to put on

Showering/bathing

- Use equipment in the bath/shower
- Wash you lower half first and then your top half. It uses more energy to bend/stretch
- Keep showering items within easy reach

Cooking

- Sit down whenever possible i.e. washing up, preparing vegetables
- Use frozen/pre-prepared vegetables, and convenience meals, if easier
- Use a kitchen trolley to move items around and reduce number of trips
- Keep the items you use most regularly close at hand
- Plan meals ahead

Housework

- Sit whenever possible i.e. use a perching stool for ironing
- Spread the tasks over the week
- Take regular breaks

Shopping

- Consider internet shopping/delivery, even if only a temporary arrangement
- Plan your food shopping list by aisles
- Seek support from friends/family to help with large/heavier items

Mood

Patients can experience feelings of low mood and anxiety following a period of illness with COVID-19, this is completely normal. If you are struggling with these feelings please let a member of the ward team know and they can offer support and assistance.

Whilst there is currently huge media interest regarding COVID-19, please remember many of the stories and articles you read may not always be verified, this can provoke further anxiety. Social media is a valuable resource, however it is important to remember much of the content is opinion based. It is useful to ensure any information is factually correct and from a reliable source.

Keeping in touch with friends and family can reduce feelings of isolation. Whilst in hospital there are iPods available to allow video calls, please ask a member of staff if this is of interest.

Trying to normalise your routine whilst in hospital is very important. Getting dressed into day clothes has been proven to have many benefits.

Sitting out of bed is extremely important for physical and mental wellbeing. Try to do this as much as you feel able throughout the day. This will also aid a better sleep at night.