Occupational Therapy Australia



Occupational therapy and mealtimes

Mealtime is a key part of everyone's day and can be a source of not just nutrition and sustenance but also pleasure and social engagement. Meals are often associated with important occasions and rituals that support a person's cultural and spiritual identity and connection to community.

Occupational therapy is part of the broader multidisciplinary team supporting people's health, nutrition and wellbeing.

Occupational therapists play an important role in supporting a person's enjoyment of and active participation in mealtimes. By identifying and addressing a range of factors that may hinder mealtimes including upper limb function changes, cognitive changes or sensory changes, occupational therapists can consider tailored strategies to reduce the impact of these factors and support participation in and enjoyment of meals.

Working with people living in their own homes, occupational therapists will consider the various factors that may impact a person's ability to make and enjoy a meal. This ranges from accessing food (i.e. going to shops), preparing the food (i.e. ability to stand at kitchen or hold utensils) right through to the ability to feed themselves and eat the meal (i.e. carry food to table or lift food to mouth).

In a residential aged care setting, occupational therapists will also consider how a person can safely feed themselves by addressing factors like seated posture, pain/comfort or low vision. Changes to how a person uses their crockery or cutlery or education to carers supporting a person can make it possible for someone to continue to participate in and enjoy their mealtimes. Equally, strategies to make the mealtime experience an opportunity for social connection and meaningful interaction are also part of the occupational therapy role.

For people experiencing cognitive decline, occupational therapists will work to address factors such as attention and concentration or sensory changes and preferences to improve a person's attraction and appetite for food and their enjoyment of mealtimes.

To access an occupational therapist:
Contact My Aged Care **1800 200 422**
Speak to your GP to obtain a referral under Medicare or DVA

To find out more about occupational therapy and to find an OT working with older people near you, visit otaus.com.au/find-an-ot

5 / 340 Gore St. Fitzroy VIC 3065 1300 682 878 otaus.com.au