

Occupational Therapy tips for better living



Life sometimes brings events or illnesses to which we need to adjust in our daily lives. Occupational Therapy (OT) is the profession that helps you do just that. OT's can give you simple ways to keep you as able as possible.

Food is a big part of life. Eating is the first thing we learn to do on our own. In this leaflet, you will find a few tips to help making meals and eating easier.

Basic tips

Save your energy:

- Sit on a kitchen stool as you make meals.
- Divide heavy tasks over a few days.
- Pace yourself, it is okay to take breaks.
- Accept offers of help from others.
- Use delivery services for your grocery shopping.
- Choose foods that are easy to make and don't be afraid to use frozen foods.



Cooking and eating is an **activity**, so try to make it fun! Share tasks with a friend, listen to good music while you work, and take the time to enjoy it.



More specific tips

Some people's state of health affects the way they eat or make food. Some of these health conditions are listed as follows, along with specific tips to help you adapt to them.

ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gherig's disease):

- Make handles on utensils thicker by wrapping them with tape or foam (use foam to insulate pipes that you can buy at a hardware store).
- Use plates with rims around the edges to help you scoop up food.
- Use plastic straws if it is hard to hold on to a glass.



Arthritis:

- Respect your pain, rest more if you are in an inflammation period (joints are red, hot and swollen)
- Use your larger joints to carry things (ex: use your forearm to carry grocery bags rather than your fingers)
- Use a trolley or a cart
- Put technology to work for you (electric can opener, electric vegetable peeler, ultra-light pots and pans)



Dementia: This is a disease of the brain that affects your memory and ability to know what every-day objects are for and how to use them. At a later stage, it may get harder to eat. These tips are for caregivers.

- Use plastic mugs with two handles.
- Serve one course at a time with only the utensils needed (i.e. with a bowl of soup, give only a spoon)
- Include a variety of tastes and textures to stimulate appetite
- Reduce distractions (television, loud music, etc.)

Lung disease:

- Eat smaller meals more often. Trying to digest a big meal takes too much energy and can make you more short of breath
- Eat a well balanced diet to help prevent colds and flu
- Save your energy (see basic tips)

Parkinson:

- Use heavier utensils to reduce hand tremors

Sight:

- Use contrasts (a white plate on a black tablecloth)
- Use textures (put magnetic letters on cans or stick different pieces of fabric on your cupboards to tell them apart)
- Ask for help to plan and do your grocery shopping

We hope those tips are helpful. The most important ones however, are stay active, eat well and have fun!

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