

FACTSHEET

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Role of the treating team in Spina Bifida: Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy plays an important role in helping children living with Spina Bifida to maximise their participation and independence in everyday activities such as self-care, school and play/leisure.

Babies and Toddlers

The occupational therapist (OT) can help you to provide safe and enjoyable ways for your baby to play. Providing these opportunities encourages all areas of your child's development such as:

- Learning to move
- Using their hands
- Exploring their surroundings
- Developing sensory abilities and thinking skills
- Learning about themselves and how to engage socially with others.

Along with the rest of the team, the OT will monitor your child's development. They will provide suggestions regarding what you can do to help your child reach their milestones.

If your child has difficulty with independent mobility, they may need to use a wheelchair. The OT will work with you and your child to find the right wheelchair, and source funding for it. The OT will teach your child how to use the wheelchair safely.

Pre-School and early Primary School

The OT can assist with your child's start at pre-school/school. They can visit the pre-school/school and make suggestions to ensure your child can access the school environment and the curriculum. The OT can advise in regards to specialised equipment your child may need. They can also meet with school staff to ensure they have the information required to best support your child.

Before your child starts school, the OT can complete an assessment to understand where they are at and what support they might need. The OT will check things like your child's hand skills, including fine motor skills and handwriting skills.

As your child gets older, some changes to your family home may be required. Areas which typically need to be modified include:

- The entrances to your house
- Doorways
- Bathrooms.

The OT can complete home visits to check what is needed to help your child get around the house more easily and do things for themselves.

The OT will assist your child to be as independent as possible with self-care tasks, such as dressing, bathing, toileting and getting ready for school.

Late Primary School and into High School

As your child grows and their needs change the OT can help to make sure they have the right equipment and support to meet these changing needs. The OT will assist with the application for a new wheelchair and/or other equipment as needed.

The OT can help when your child is moving on to high school. A school visit can be arranged and information shared with the high school staff to make sure your child is well supported.

Adolescence is a period of increasing independence. The OT can continue to provide support and advice on how to help your child do the activities they need to do, as well as the activities they want to do. These activities may include getting dressed, going to school, going out with friends, participating in sports/hobbies and learning to drive.