

What is an Occupational Therapist? (Early Years)

An occupational therapist (OT) is an allied health professional who supports people of all ages to participate in everyday activities that are meaningful and important for them.

OTs seek to understand the whole person, and the environments in which they live, work and participate to find ways to assist them to overcome barriers and find solutions. They work in many industries, supporting people to participate fully in their daily lives.

What does occupational therapy look like in the early years?

There are many activities children want and need to engage in. From playing with friends, to learning, or putting on their shoes. An OT will work with the child and their important adults to identify goals and develop a plan to meet them. Because OT's support a wide range of goals, each child's plan will be individualised and cater to their needs / priorities.

OTs may use a play-based therapy approach, embedding learning into fun activities. They may help practice skills in the places most needed (e.g. learning about toileting at home in the child's own bathroom). OTs may also provide coaching or upskilling that will help families identify ways to support their child achieve goals within daily routines.

OTs deliver supports in a clinic, in the child's home and/or their early childhood settings, and anywhere in between. They can also use telehealth to deliver their service. OTs work closely with other professions including speech pathology, psychology and physiotherapy.

As an educator, when should I recommend a child sees an OT?

An OT can be recommended if a child is not meeting developmental milestones or is having difficulty participating for any other reason. OTs can provide support in a wide variety of developmental areas including play and social participation, motor skills development, skills in independence (e.g dressing or toileting), sensory regulation, processing differences and more.

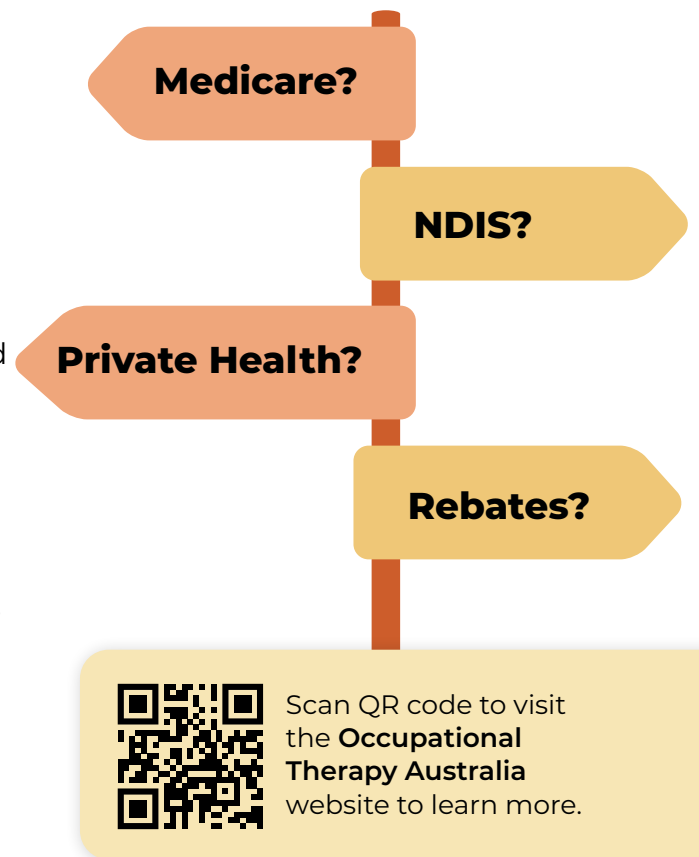
Does a family need a referral for their child to see an OT?

A referral is not required, however families may wish to speak with their General Practitioner/doctor about a referral as this may enable them access to a Medicare plan for rebates on OT sessions.

Apart from Medicare, what other funding is available for occupational therapy?

Children with a diagnosed disability or who are acknowledged as having a developmental delay may qualify for NDIS funding, which can be used to access occupational therapy services.

Children without a diagnosed disability may be able to access rebates through the family's private health fund. The family can also contact their NDIS Early Childhood Partner to see if their child might be eligible for occupational therapy through the *NDIS Early Childhood Approach*.



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This resource is proudly funded & supported by:

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