



SPOTLIGHT

Working Solutions for Agricultural Communities



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN AGRICULTURE

▶▶▶ WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY?

Occupational therapy (OT) is an allied healthcare profession that helps people of all ages with an injury, illness, or disability return to meaningful activities such as:

- **Activities of daily living (ADLs)** → Dressing, bathing, eating, toileting, and other forms of self care.
- **Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)** → Cooking, driving, medication management, and household tasks.
- **Leisure activities** → Playing an instrument or participating in sports.
- **Reintegration back into the community** → Work, transportation, and medical appointments.

**THERAPY FOR
EVERYDAY
LIVING**

Occupational therapists work with patients to improve and maintain the skills needed for everyday life by evaluating home and work environments, developing unique treatment plans, and making recommendations for assistive devices.

➤➤➤ OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY VS. PHYSICAL THERAPY

Occupational therapy and physical therapy (PT) share many similarities and often collaborate to help patients reach their goals. While both aim to improve motion and strength, their approach is different.

The primary goal of physical therapy is to restore movement by improving range of motion and strength through a biomechanical model such as:

- Strengthening exercises
- Stretching
- Active range of motion exercises
- Assistive range of motion exercises



WHEN IS IT TIME TO SEE AN OT?

Patients should see an OT if they have experienced an injury or are having difficulty completing everyday activities due to physical limitations, mental health concerns, or even financial barriers. By addressing these barriers, occupational therapists help patients return to meaningful activities.

Occupational therapy takes a more holistic approach. Like PT, OT also aims to improve range of motion and strength, but by using function as a form of exercise, such as:

- Activities of daily living (ADLs)
- Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)
- Leisure activities
- Work activities

Occupational therapy also focuses on other factors affecting health and wellbeing, such as:

- Mental health
- Stress and symptom management
- Sensory abnormalities
- Scar desensitization and nervous system rewiring
- Financial and socio-economic status
- Cognition
- Vision (i.e. Eye alignment, visual tracking, and lighting modifications)
- Home and work modifications



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN AGRICULTURE



Agricultural worker educating the OT student and promotora on how to adjust a bucket harness.



OT student educating/instructing agricultural worker on appropriate harness wear to decrease tension on the neck.

Occupational therapy is particularly beneficial for those with existing injuries. Through education and guidance on proper strengthening exercises, taping techniques, and medication. Serious injuries may have life-changing effects impacting mental health, finances, and family dynamics. Occupational therapists may also serve as advocates for their patients by connecting them to local resources or agencies that provide assistance with:

- School for your children
- Low cost meals
- Applying for medical coverage
- Navigating the healthcare system

Recently an OT student collaborated with seasonal cherry pickers at local farms to learn about their work environment, body mechanics, equipment and gear, and pain and injury risks that may occur throughout the season. Based on observations and worker reports, the student provided education on proper equipment and work wear, safe body positioning, and important stretching and strengthening exercises to prevent injuries.

Occupational therapists understand the complexity and importance of agricultural work. Working with an occupational therapist can help with rehabilitation after a work related injury has occurred and assist in the prevention of secondary injuries.

HOW TO SCHEDULE WITH AN OT

The referral process varies from case to case, but typically starts by visiting a primary care provider (PCP) to obtain a referral. Work related injuries should be reported to the employer. If the injury qualifies for workers compensation, a case manager will assist with locating a doctor coordinating appointments.

Go to www.aota.org/about/what-is-ot to learn more about OT. To find a local certified occupational therapist, go to www.findanoccupationaltherapist.com/.

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Email: calagra@ucdavis.edu
Toll Free Phone (800) 477-6129
(530) 752-1613

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abilitytools.org
Email: info@abilitytools.org
Toll Free (800) 390-2699
TTY: (800) 900-0706

