

# The Kent Centre for Pain Medicine and Neuromodulation

## Occupational therapy

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### Information for patients from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists

This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

#### **Occupational therapy can help you to cope with pain**

Experiencing chronic pain is very common. Pain can occur anywhere in your body, at any age, and be caused by a variety of health conditions. It can affect all aspects of your life, including how you move, think, sleep, feel, and carry out everyday activities.

It is a very personal experience, and how you experience pain affects how you deal with it and the impact it has on you. If pain stops you from doing activities you need or want to do, you will probably feel frustrated and low, and unfortunately this can make your pain worse.



## What is an occupational therapist?

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who help people of all ages (babies, children, adults, and older people) to carry out activities they need or want to do, but are prevented from doing so as a result of physical or mental illness, disability, or the effects of ageing.

Activities can include the necessities of daily living such as getting dressed, preparing a meal, going to work, or simply continuing with a favourite hobby. Occupational therapists will work with individuals to help them to find alternative ways to carry on with activities, to enable them to live life their way and provide practical support to help individuals do the activities that matter to them.

### **An occupational therapist can:**

- Provide advice and training when doing daily activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, and taking part in a favourite hobby.
- Help people with work-related stress to re-prioritise tasks to improve their work-life balance.
- Assess and recommend equipment such as mobility aids, wheelchairs, and artificial limbs. If needed, they can also give advice on special devices to help around the home, school, or in the workplace.
- Support people to remain in or return to work.

## What do occupational therapists do?

An occupational therapist uses their professional expertise in understanding how the body works when doing everyday activities and tasks. Following a detailed assessment, the occupational therapist can apply problem solving techniques to help you manage your pain and break the cycle of thinking about it, so you can continue with activities that you enjoy and need to do.

### **Occupational therapists can help you to carry out activities despite feeling pain by:**

- advising on planning, pacing, and prioritising your activities
- providing assistive equipment, if needed; and
- suggesting ways to help you to conserve energy, and provide advice on caring for your muscles and joints.

## An occupational therapist can help you to:

### 1. Remain active

An occupational therapist will:

- assess your pain and learn about your interests and usual routines to build up your stamina gradually, so you can carry on with your daily activities
- help you to schedule your activities to include periods of rest
- show you techniques to help you overcome pain whilst remaining active; and
- show you how to use assistive equipment and technology.

### 2. Improve your back care

An occupational therapist will:

- help you develop strategies for bending, lifting, and reaching; and
- provide advice on how to incorporate exercise and relaxation in to your daily life.

### 3. Relax and sleep

An occupational therapist will suggest alternatives to medication to help with sleep, such as tried and tested relaxation techniques.

### 4. Cope with continuous pain

An occupational therapist will:

- develop a daily routine with you to help you to prioritise your activities
- provide coping strategies such as distraction techniques and visual imagery; and
- find activities that you enjoy or find relaxing, which may ease the pain you are experiencing.

### 5. Return to work

An occupational therapist will:

- undertake an assessment to gauge the activities you can do comfortably at work
- develop new strategies to enable you to increase your stamina
- advise you on overcoming pain-causing hazards at work; and
- recommend assistive technology and alternative ways of working.

## How can I contact an occupational therapist?

Ask your GP, nurse, or other health or social care professional to refer you to an occupational therapist. To find an occupational therapist in your area, visit the Royal College of Occupational Therapists web site [www.rcot.co.uk](http://www.rcot.co.uk)

**For leisure, learning, living, or working, occupational therapy helps people to live life their way**

## Further information

If you have any concerns regarding the information in this leaflet or your procedure, please phone the Pain Clinic.

## Kent Centre for Pain Medicine and Neuromodulation (direct lines)

- Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Canterbury Telephone: 01227 78 30 49
- Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Margate Telephone: 01843 23 50 94
- William Harvey Hospital, Ashford Telephone: 01233 61 66 91

## Useful information

For further information on chronic pain and its treatment options, please go to the East Kent Hospitals Chronic Pain web page [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/chronic-pain-leaflets](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/chronic-pain-leaflets)

**This leaflet has been produced with grateful acknowledgment to the Royal College of Occupational Therapists**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)