



Occupational therapy: The Kent Centre for Pain Medicine and Neuromodulation

Information for patients from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapy can help you to cope with pain

- Experiencing chronic (long-term) pain is very common.
- Pain can occur anywhere in your body, at any age, and be caused by a variety of health conditions.
- Pain can affect all aspects of your life. It can affect how you move, think, sleep, feel, and carry out everyday activities.
- It is a very personal experience. 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 can feel frustrated and low. Unfortunately this can make your pain worse.

What is an occupational therapist?

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals. They help people of all ages 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 necessary daily tasks, including:

- getting dressed
- preparing a meal

- going to work, or
- continuing with a favourite hobby.

Occupational therapists will work with you to:

- help you find alternative ways to carry on with these activities
- live your life how you want, and
- provide practical support to help you do the activities that matter to you.

What do occupational therapists do?

An occupational therapist understands how the body works when doing daily activities and tasks. After a detailed assessment, an 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, to improve your work-life balance.
- Providing assistive equipment, if needed 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.
- 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. Doing this will help 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.
- 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.
- Provide advice on how to incorporate exercise and relaxation into your daily life.

3. Relax and sleep

An occupational therapist will suggest alternatives to medication to help with sleep, such as 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.
- Find activities that you enjoy or find relaxing, which may ease your pain.

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 help you to increase your stamina.
- Advise you on how to deal with pain-causing hazards at work.
- 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 (<https://www.rcot.co.uk/>).

Occupational therapy helps people to live life their way

Further information

If you have any concerns about 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 783049
- Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital, Margate
Telephone: 01843 235094
- William Harvey Hospital, Ashford
Telephone: 01233 616691

Useful information

For further information on chronic pain and its treatment options, please go to the East Kent Hospitals Chronic Pain web page (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/?i=leaflets&categories=chronic-pain>).

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This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring 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 has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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