



Does my Child need Occupational Therapy?

WHAT CHALLENGES DOES YOUR CHILD EXPERIENCE?

Does your child have difficulties with day-to-day activities at home, school, or in the community? Does your child experience learning challenges?

- Unable to concentrate and focus at school, easily distracted and tires easily
- Difficulty following instructions and completing work
- Poor impulse control
- Hyperactivity or low energy
- Not keeping up with workload at school and difficulty learning new material
- Makes letter or number reversals after age seven

How to use the checklist below - when moving through the examples, please note that if your child exhibits 2 or more concerns/delays in the following 6 areas of development, an Occupational Therapist may be recommended:

(1) DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Developmental delay means that a child is behind in a combination of skills or not meeting developmental milestones that are common during a particular age or during a particular time period. These are examples of developmental delays:

- Not reaching developmental milestones of sitting, crawling, and walking
- Not learning at an age appropriate level
- Not developing age appropriate play and social skills

(2) FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Fine motor skills are small movements made with fingers, toes, wrists, lips, and tongue. If your child is struggling with fine motor skills, they may have difficulty with one of these tasks:

- Manipulating toys and puzzles
- Holding or using a pencil, fork, spoon, or straws at an age-appropriate time
- Using scissors
- Using zippers, buttons, shoelaces
- Coloring, drawing, tracing, prewriting shapes
- Poor handwriting, letter/number formation
- Not developing a hand dominance at an age-appropriate time
- Avoiding tasks and games that require fine motor skills



(3) GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Gross motor skills (i.e. movement, balance, and strength) help us move and coordinate the larger muscles that control our body. A child who is behind in gross motor skills may appear clumsy or uncoordinated. They may also have difficulty with the following:

- Going up and down stairs
- Coordinating both sides of the body
- Understanding the concept of right and left
- Poor ball skills
- Poor balance

Muscle tone, or muscle tension and resistance, could be higher or lower than the appropriate developmental milestone, which may exhibit as:

- Being fearful of feet leaving the ground
- Not crossing the midline during tasks
- Avoiding tasks and games that require gross motor skills

(4) VISUAL PROCESSING

Visual processing is the process we use to interpret visual information. If your child has difficulty with one of the following:

- Spacing and sizing of letters
- Recognizing letters
- Copying shapes or letters
- Visual tracking and crossing midline
- Finding objects among other objects
- Copying from the board or another paper
- Discrimination between right and left
- Eye contact and visual tracking (i.e. losing place while reading or copying from the board)



(5) ORAL MOTOR/ORAL SENSORY

Oral motor or oral sensory skills are control of muscle movements in the face and oral area, such as the lips, jaw, tongue, and soft palate. Delayed oral motor processing as seen with:

- Excessive drooling
- Chewing food in the front of the mouth, rather than on the molars
- Difficulty using a cup at an age-appropriate time
- Difficulty with drinking from a straw at an age-appropriate time
- Lengthy bottle or breast feedings
- Tiredness after eating
- Baby losing excessive liquid from his or her lips when bottle or breast feeding
- Child losing excessive liquid or food from his or her mouth when drinking or chewing
- Being a picky eater - only eating certain types or textures of food
- Excessive mouthing of toys or objects beyond an age-appropriate time

(6) SENSORY PROCESSING

Sensory processing (i.e. auditory, proprioceptive, vestibular, tactile stimuli) is making sense of information that we receive through our senses. Your child may have difficulty processing specific sensory stimuli and exhibit the following symptoms:

- Over-responsive or heightened reactivity to Sound, Touch, or Movement
- Under-responsive to certain sensations (e.g., high pain tolerance, doesn't notice cuts/bruises)
- Constantly moving, jumping, crashing, bumping
- Easily distracted by visual or auditory stimuli
- Emotionally reactive
- Difficulty coping with change
- Inability to calm self when upset

Remember that all children are different and develop these skill sets at their own pace. However, if you think your child may be struggling with adopting some of the skill areas above, you can contact an occupational therapist for a more comprehensive assessment.