



Living with a long-term condition

If you have a long-term condition, you are likely to rely on medication and other therapies to help you to cope with it. There are many steps that you can take to improve your sense of wellbeing and control.

If your symptoms are mild, there are simple steps you or a friend/family member can do, to help you manage. This might reduce some of the frustration you may feel and help you to feel more positive. If your needs are complex, or you're unsure how to manage your situation, you might benefit from the support of an occupational therapist.

Top tips

from occupational therapists

Take care of yourself

- **Eat and drink healthily** with plenty of fruit, vegetables and water, to help boost your immune system and energy levels.
- **Identify the triggers** that make you feel worse and look for ways to reduce or manage them.
- **Sleep helps**, but if you are struggling, try avoiding tea and coffee, taking a bath, using blackout curtains, listening to gentle music or deep breathing exercises.
- **Avoid staying still for too long.** Exercise and regular movement will maintain fitness and strength.

Manage your activities

- **Plan ahead.** Set realistic goals by breaking each task into small steps, give yourself plenty of time to carry out each step and take regular breaks
- **Look at your daily routine** to see where you have problems. Consider each one separately and see if there are some simple solutions or technology that could help.
- **Balance your weekly routine** so you have a good mix of work, rest and leisure activities.

Manage at home, school and work

- **Organise your home** so you have everything you need within easy reach to reduce the demands on your body.
- **Make adjustments** to your environment to reduce effort and risk. Rearranging furniture, changing the height of your chair or bed and installing bath aids or grab rails could all help.

Ask your local authority about handyman services who could come and do minor jobs, usually for a small fee.

Ask for support

- **Get advice and support** by using online resources and joining support groups. Sharing ideas and experiences with other people can help.
- **Talk with family and friends** to help them understand how you feel and how they can support you.
- **Talk with someone at work, school or college** and discuss what they could do to help you, such as having a workspace that meets your needs.

Occupational therapy helping people to live, not exist



Occupational therapists provide practical support to help you do the activities that matter to you. They will consider all of your needs – physical, psychological, social and environmental. Their support can make a real difference giving a renewed sense of purpose, opening up new horizons, and changing the way you feel about the future.

Support from an occupational therapist

An occupational therapist will consider your strengths, abilities and health care needs. They will find out what you want and need to be able to do and then consider if your environment (home, workplace, school, etc.) supports or hinders your ability to do those things. They can then find ways to make life easier and support you to manage daily tasks and activities. This might include support with self-care, household chores, getting out and about, finding or staying in work or education, or taking part in social and leisure activities.

Arranging to see an occupational therapist

Speak with your GP or a health and social care professional - they might be able to arrange for you to see an occupational therapist. Before you speak with anyone, you might find it helpful to spend some time writing down the things you're worried about or struggle with; it will help you feel more prepared.

If you see an occupational therapist on the NHS, or through education or social services, you will not have to pay. Alternatively, you could consider contacting a local independent occupational therapist who works outside the NHS and social care services. You will need to pay for their services. You, or a friend or carer, can find contact details of independent occupational therapists online at www.rcotss-ip.org.uk/find.

Occupation matters

rcot.co.uk

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