

## **How would I know if my child might benefit from occupational therapy services?**

Parenting a child can be the most rewarding and difficult occupation that you will ever undertake! Children can be fun but challenging to parent when they are not developing “typically.” Frequently, parents wonder if their frustrations are indeed typical (as in “the terrible twos”) or if there is something more going on. Please read below, and if you answer “yes” to three or more statements, your child may benefit from occupational therapy. Please be aware that even answering “yes” to every statement does not mean that your child requires therapy. The frequency, intensity and durations of the behaviors and the negative impact on daily functioning is a crucial consideration.

### **Birth to 3 years of age:**

- Easily startled
- Decreased muscle tone (muscles may feel “soft”)
- Difficulty consoling self, unusually fussy
- Unable to bring hands together and bang toys
- Slow to roll over, creep, sit or stand
- Difficulty babbling
- Failure to explore
- Cries or becomes tense when moved through space
- Frequent fisting of hands after six months
- Difficulty tolerating being prone (on stomach)
- Dislikes baths
- Difficulty playing with age appropriate toys
- Resists being held, dislikes being cuddled, becomes tense when held
- Sucking and/or feeding difficulties
- Overly active, seeks excessive movement
- Unable to settle down, sleep difficulties/erratic wake-sleep cycles

### **Preschool-age:**

- Says “I can’t” or “I won’t” to age-appropriate self-care or play activities
- Bumps into furniture or people or has trouble judging personal space
- Avoids playground or movement activities that involve having their feet off of the ground
- Over-reacts or under-reacts to touch, taste, sounds, odors, or movements
- Has difficulty focusing attention or becomes over-focused and unable to shift to the next task
- Needs more practice than other children to learn new skills
- Has delayed language development
- Dislikes coloring, doing puzzles, or cutting with scissors
- Breaks toys or crayons easily
- Seems clumsy and/or falls frequently

### **School-age:**

- Dislikes handwriting, tires quickly during written class work
- Difficulty paying attention or following instructions
- Overly active, unable to slow down

- Poor self-esteem, lack of confidence
- Dislikes swimming, bathing, hugs, and/or hair cuts
- Overreacts or underreacts to touch, taste, sounds, odors, or movement
- Avoids physical education or sports activities
- Finds it difficult to make friends with children of the same age, prefers to play with adults or younger children rather than peers
- Difficulty following multiple step instructions for motor tasks
- Difficulty focusing attention or over-focused and unable to shift to the next task
- Low muscle tone; tends to lean on arms or slumps at desk
- Needs more practice than other children to learn new skills
- Reverse letters such as b and d; cannot space letters on the lines
- Breaks pencils frequently or writes with heavy pressure
- Does not enjoy jumping, swings or having feet off of the ground

**Adolescent:**

- Fearful of movement
- Sensitive to touch
- Unaware of body position in space
- Has not had the opportunity to use their bodies effectively, as they avoid physical education and sports activities
- Appear depressed
- Have low self-esteem
- Prefer to be alone and/or frequently spend time alone
- Spend excessive amounts of time on computer or video game activities
- Have general difficulties with relationships
- Have difficulty initiating age-appropriate activities and leisure pursuits
- Have difficulties at school