

Living With Heart Problems



A person who has been diagnosed with cardiovascular, or heart, disease probably has many questions about how to go about engaging in meaningful, everyday activities and still stay safe and prevent further illness. A person with cardiovascular disease may have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and be susceptible to diabetes, and there may be certain activities that a person should modify to stay healthy.

An occupational therapist can help answer the questions a person may have regarding his or her heart disease so that he or she can live a meaningful and productive life everyday.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Evaluate** a person's physical and psychological health.
- **Determine** what work, home, and leisure activities should be modified to reduce strain on the heart.
- **Adjust** tasks and schedule to minimize stress and fatigue.
- **Recommend** pacing strategies and adaptive equipment that may help a person to expend less energy and reduce strain on the heart.
- **Teach** coping strategies for people who have feelings of anxiety and depression because of heart problems.

What can a person with cardiovascular disease do?

- **Implement** a program of progressive activity and exercise to build strength and endurance.
- **Learn** relaxation and stress management techniques.
- **Modify** activities at home, work, and during leisure so as not to cause unnecessary strain on the heart.

Need more information?

Heart disease is a serious problem that requires constant supervision by a health professional. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist about living with heart problems, practitioners are available through most hospitals, community clinics, and medical centers.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children with a broad range of physical, developmental, and

psychological conditions. Practitioners also help clients and their caregivers with strategies that can prevent injury and secondary complications, and support health and well-being. Contact your local health organizations for more information.