

Role of Occupational Therapy in Burns

Occupational Therapy for burns

Recovery following your burn injury needs the expertise of the burn care team. As a member of this team, your Occupational Therapist (OT) is involved throughout all stages of your recovery process. Together with your OT, you will work towards therapy goals to resume independence in self-care, leisure and work activities to regain your quality of life.

Every burn injury is unique, depending on its cause, depth, size, and location. The healing process also varies depending on your age and other medical conditions.

Your OT will regularly assess your burn injury and skin healing during your hospital stay and at outpatient clinics. Burns that involve the face, hands or feet are likely to need frequent OT review due to the physical and cosmetic impact of scarring.

Occupational Therapy for burns includes:

Skin Protection

Healing skin and grafts are fragile and may be at risk of skin breakdown. The OT will assist to protect your skin by:

- Splinting to prevent newly grafted skin from moving
- Positioning to prevent pressure injury development
- Giving education about skin care, sun protection, protective clothing and footwear.

Joint Protection

Joint stiffness can result from decreased movement and poor positioning. The OT will help to minimise joint stiffness by:

- Supporting joints in the best possible position
- Managing oedema (swelling).
- Facilitating normal movement in daily tasks.

Oedema (Swelling) Management

Oedema often occurs after skin or soft tissue injury. This can limit wound healing, joint movement and function. The OT manages oedema by:

- Applying compression using bandages or garments
- Supporting and elevating swollen limbs.
- Encouraging normal movement in daily tasks.

Scar Management

Burns often result in scarring which may become thick, tight and discoloured. This may cause pain, restricted movement and psychological distress. The OT will manage your scars by:

- Applying compression bandages or garments
- Applying silicone products
- Demonstrating appropriate scar massage.

Functional Upper Limb Therapy

Occupational Therapy for upper limb burns aims to maximise your independence in activities of daily living (ADL), work and leisure activities. Assessment and rehabilitation with the OT may include:

- Joint range of movement, sensation and strength.
- Grasp and release, fine motor control, and object manipulation focusing on daily activities (e.g. writing, eating, dressing).
- ADL retraining using assistive devices where necessary.

Occupational Therapy also addresses:

- Burn skin hypersensitivity
- Cognition / thinking ability
- Assistive equipment for safety and independence
- Home environment assessment and modifications
- Corrective cosmetics
- Return to work/school/driving
- Referral to other specialist services as required

Please contact your Occupational Therapist if you have any queries or concerns.

Occupational Therapist: _____

Phone: (07) 3646 7100