

WHAT IS REHABILITATION THERAPY?

Therapies for your Senior

At some point in your senior's medical treatment, you will likely hear the term "Rehabilitation Therapy." This refers to the trio of Physical, Occupational and Speech/Language Therapy. These can be some of the most helpful and integrative therapies your senior will participate in as they can work in tandem to help your loved one to learn a new way of accomplishing things in their daily lives. These therapies can work together as solutions to avoid surgery or reliance on medications.



Physical Therapy (PT) is used to help address the effects of disease, injury, and disability by using exercise, manual therapy, education, and therapeutic activity. The primary goal of PT is to improve movement and help reduce the pain associated with immobility. Imagine your loved one rising stiffly from their chair or hunching painfully. Physical therapy will work to help them feel less pain when performing these simple tasks. PT can also be used to help reduce or prevent injury, which can enable a person to avoid surgery or reliance on medications.



GOALS

- Diagnose physical problems restricting movement because of an illness or injury
- Ease pain & boost mobility and muscle strength through exercises and other techniques
- Develop fitness and wellness programs aimed at preventing injuries and encouraging a more active lifestyle

Source: [Allied Health Schools](#)

Occupational Therapy (OT) is directed at helping your senior to regain some level of independence in their daily activities. These therapies can help your senior with cooking, bathing, dressing, toileting, eating, and more. Maybe your loved one is losing weight unnecessarily merely because they are having difficulty feeding themselves or preparing their meals. OT can regain a level of independence for them. Much of the work by an OT can be done in the home. In some cases, these adjustments may include assistive devices such as splints, braces, or canes.



- Help patients with daily living skills and self-care tasks such as getting dressed
- Support patients with memory loss or other cognitive issues
- Make recommendations about adaptive equipment

Source: [Allied Health Schools](#)

Speech-language pathology (SLP) is used to help your senior with communication, swallowing, and/or eating. Communicating effectively and swallowing safely can play a huge role in a patient's ability to participate in social rituals like mealtime, make their wants and needs known, connect with their loved ones, or continue working in a specific vocation. SLPs work with individuals with a variety of diagnoses (ranging from stroke and autism spectrum disorder to head and neck cancer and traumatic brain injury).



- Strengthen the muscles in the mouth, jaw, and neck
- Help people work on goals related to social communication
- Evaluate and provide treatment plans for feeding and swallowing challenges

Source: [Autism Speaks](#)

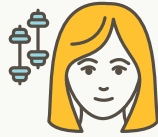
Source: [OT Potential](#)

How Do These Therapies Work Together?

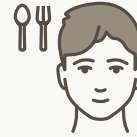
While your senior may not need all three legs of the Rehabilitation Therapy trio, they can benefit from any combination. For example, in the instance of a stroke:



An SLP can help your loved one communicate their fears, desires and successes with you and with your care team.



A PT would step in to strengthen weakened muscles and to help regain some bilateral strength, keeping other muscles from being injured when compensating for the weak ones.



An OT will assist your senior in relearning to eat, cook, open doors, button and zip their clothes, and move from sitting to standing.

Source: [All Allied Health Schools](#)



One of the most notable losses during aging is mobility. Even when dementia or Alzheimer's sets in, your loved one will still want to be active, communicate, go out to eat, care for and dress themselves, or move about their living space with some ease. These are the activities that the PT/OT/SLP team can help with to prolong a sense of independence. These three therapies are valid for anyone who has any form of mobility issues, including those with Parkinson's, dementia, stroke, or muscular degeneration.

Often the physical side of their aging can be overlooked in the process of treating the emotional and mental changes. There is solid evidence that physical activity can be effective for stemming the progression of dementia and provide a level of happiness and independence not gained by merely working with their mental losses. The techniques used by therapists would be like those used to treat patients with brain injury from trauma, stroke, or other brain conditions such as cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis.

It is important that your senior likes and trusts the therapist you bring in as they will be asking them to step outside of their comfort zone and your loved one may not be able to understand why.

Source: [PT in Motion](#)



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