

CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

And the Role of Occupational Therapy

Autism is a complex disorder that affects brain function, specifically those areas that control social behaviors and communication skills. Children with autism show difficulty with verbal and nonverbal communication.

What is the purpose of occupational therapy for children?

At Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy, occupational therapy focuses on your child's participation in their "occupations," or purposeful activities, throughout the day. For a child, this may include feeding, dressing, grooming, school tasks, hobbies, play and social skills. Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy's services are individually tailored to the needs, goals and priorities of your child and family.

What does an occupational therapist do?

- Evaluate your child to determine their ability to complete age-appropriate tasks in the areas of self-care skills, fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination skills and sensory processing skills. Your customized evaluation may include clinical observation, standardized testing, a parental interview and a written report. A personalized report specially prepared by Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy can be useful for explaining your child's needs to other medical professionals, teachers or family members.
- Develop long-term and short-term goals to address the needs of not only your child, but also your entire family.
- Provide treatment to help your child complete age-appropriate skills and better interact with their environment. Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy offers flexibility in treatment locations to achieve the best results. Treatment may occur at our therapy facility, in your child's home, school and/or in a community activity or facility.
- Facilitate innovative play activities that encourage your child to appropriately interact and communicate with others. Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy finds that "just-right challenge" for your child to encourage success while minimizing frustration.
- Collaborate with your child, family, educators and other service providers to encourage improvement in your child's daily tasks and social skills.

What is sensory processing and sensory integration dysfunction?

A child may have difficulty with social interaction and communication because of sensory processing issues. Estimates indicate that 80% of children with autism have sensory processing issues. This means that they have difficulty distinguishing what is and what is not important sensory information from their environment. They do not relate to what is happening around them in the way that other children do. Sensory processing issues can manifest into issues with behavior, following directions and attention span.

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Jennie Lewin Kreger, OTR/L

How can Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy help my child with sensory processing/sensory integration?

The therapists at Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy can provide practical things you can do throughout your child's day to address their sensory issues so that your child will be better able to complete daily tasks. Families at Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy receive one-on-one attention from the therapists. The sessions focus on your child, incorporate age-appropriate active and interactive play activities and provide your child with problem-solving activities. Sessions are a great time for parents to gain a better perspective on the issues facing their child, to ask the therapist questions, and to interact with their child in a fun way. Through education and demonstration, families gain a better understanding of sensory processing and sensory integration.

What are "fine motor skills" and "visual-motor integration skills?"

Fine motor skills use the small muscles of your hands and fingers. These skills require grasping and manipulating small objects, such as buttoning and zipping clothes, picking-up small objects from a table and holding a pencil.

Visual-motor integration is the degree to which visual perception and finger-hand movements are well coordinated. Writing combines fine motor skills (manipulating a writing utensil appropriately) and visual-motor integration skills (copying the words onto paper from the blackboard or from memory).

Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy addresses fine motor and visual-motor skills during treatment sessions and through standardized testing and goal setting. Your child is encouraged to master age-appropriate tasks improve that their independence in self-care skills, such as dressing and undressing, and school tasks, such as using scissors and writing.

How can I find occupational therapy for my child?

Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy is a premier private practice in central Boca Raton offering pediatric occupational therapy services. Jennie Lewin Kreger, the founding therapist, has over ten years of experience in pediatrics and occupational therapy. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals and textbooks, and she has traveled the world presenting to physicians and therapists.

Occupational therapy is a skilled health, rehabilitation and education service covered by private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, worker's compensation, vocational programs, behavioral health programs, early intervention, and school programs. Preschool and school-age children and youth (to age 21) may be eligible for occupational therapy services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Contact Jennie Lewin Kreger, OTR/L at Gold Coast Pediatric Therapy at (561) 368-9700 to schedule your free screening and learn more about our innovative treatment options.
