

# Occupational Therapy Toolkit

## Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

### **Functional Limitations:**

ADL, IADL, work and leisure impairment  
Functional mobility impairment  
Progressive muscle weakness and atrophy  
Muscle cramps and spasms  
Poor coordination  
Impaired balance  
Fatigue  
Shortness of breath due to weakness of diaphragm  
Fall risk  
Environmental barriers  
Knowledge deficit  
Other symptoms and conditions - adhesive capsulitis, sialorrhea (excessive saliva)  
pseudo-bulbar affect (emotional lability), depression, anxiety, urinary urgency,  
dysphasia, dysarthria

### **Not affected:**

Eye muscles  
Bowel and bladder sphincters  
Internal organs  
Sexual functions  
Sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch/pressure  
Cognition usually not affected but 10-15% may develop frontotemporal dementia

### **Occupational Therapy Intervention:**

ADL, IADL, work and leisure training using adaptive equipment and alternative methods to compensate for weakness including but not limited to...

- Button hook, zipper pull, built ups for pens, utensils, toothbrushes
- Padded bathroom safety equipment, dressing equipment, telephone aides
- Environmental control unit, mobile arm supports, suspension slings

Driving assessment and adaptations

Functional mobility training

- Train in proper transfer techniques and bed mobility skills as they relate to ADL and IADL tasks

- Use of adaptive equipment, hospital bed, lift chairs, standard wheelchair/electric wheelchair, transfer boards, hoist lifts

Teach energy conservation principles

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Provide UE, neck and trunk therapeutic activities and exercises

For mild weakness, instruct in resistive exercises for muscles above 3+/5 followed by stretching exercises

If an exercise regimen consistently produces muscle soreness or fatigue lasting longer than 30 minutes after exercise, it is too strenuous.

As weakness progresses provide assisted ROM and stretching exercises and finally instruct caregiver to perform passive ROM and stretching exercises

Provide splints to support weak joints - wrist cock-up, arm sling, cervical collar, resting hand splint

Instruct in proper support and positioning in sitting, during meals and in bed

Teach stress management and relaxation techniques

Assist in developing self-management skills (effective communication, positive coping strategies, stress reduction, physical activity and exercise, medication management, healthy eating, and making informed decisions about medical and alternative treatments)

Assess home safety and functional safety and provide environmental modifications and adaptations

Educate patient and caregivers in disease process, availability of community resources and encourage participation in support groups

### **Patient Education:**

1. Upper Body Strengthening Activities
2. Upper Body Strengthening and Stretching Exercises
3. Passive ROM and Stretching Exercises
4. Splint Instructions
5. Energy Conservation Principles
6. Energy Conservation with Self Care Activities
7. Energy Conservation with Meal and Home Management
8. Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques
9. Falls Risks Assessment and Prevention Strategies
10. Home Safety and Functional Safety Assessment