

# Occupational Therapy Toolkit

## Scleroderma / Systemic Sclerosis

### **Functional Limitations:**

ADL, IADL, work and leisure impairments  
Functional mobility impairment  
Limited activity tolerance and endurance  
Dyspnea  
Restricted UE ROM  
Limited upper body strength  
Myopathy  
Joint stiffness, swelling and pain  
Impaired fine motor skills  
Reduced oral aperture  
Claw hand deformity  
Impaired body image  
Impaired oral mobility  
Fall risk  
Environmental barriers

Progression of the skin over many years:

Edematous stage - skin of the hands become swollen, but without pitting edema, and sometimes severely itchy and hypersensitive to touch

Sclerotic stage - skin is tight and shiny, loss of hair and decreased sweating

Atrophic stage - skin becomes atrophic and feels less tight, it is still bound down to the subcutaneous tissue

Other symptoms and conditions - Raynaud's phenomena, ischemic ulcers (finger tips, knuckles, toes, lips nose and ears), carpal tunnel syndrome, cubital tunnel syndrome, renal disease, pulmonary fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension, pericardial effusion, congestive heart failure, GI involvement, dysphagia, Sjögren syndrome, depression

### **Occupational Therapy Intervention:**

ADL, IADL, work and leisure training including but not limited to...

Recommend and/or provide adaptive equipment and alternative methods to compensate for limited grasp and fine motor skills

Instruct in energy conservation, work simplification and joint protection techniques

Dental care using pediatric toothbrush, adaptations for flossing

Functional mobility training

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

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Provide graded UE therapeutic activities and exercises to maintain joint mobility, facial mobility and chest excursion

Instruct in facial exercise, hand exercises and general stretching exercises

Instruct in pain management techniques

Teach stress management and relaxation techniques, provide paraffin baths and massage

Calcium deposits can form on the elbows, knees and ischial tuberosities, recommend gel elbow pads, knee pads and seating cushions to prevent breakdown of the skin

Educate regarding falls risk and prevention strategies

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

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)

Educate patient and caregivers about scleroderma, the availability of community resources and encourage participation in support groups

### **Patient Education:**

1. Superficial Heat
2. Home Exercise Program Face Sheet
3. Face & Neck Active ROM Exercises
4. Forearm & Wrist Active ROM Exercises
5. Hand Active ROM Exercises
6. Upper Body Strengthening and Stretching Exercises
7. Fine Motor Activities
8. Splint Instructions
9. Joint Protection Principles
10. Proper Posture
11. Body Mechanics
12. Energy Conservation Principles
13. Energy Conservation with Self Care Activities
14. Energy Conservation with Meal and Home Management
15. Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques
16. Home Safety and Functional Safety Assessment
17. Falls Risks Assessment and Prevention Strategies