

What is Hand Therapy?

Hand Therapy is a type of rehabilitation performed by an occupational or physical therapist on patients with conditions affecting the hands and upper extremities. Such therapy is performed by a provider with a high degree of specialization that requires continuing education and, often, advanced certification. This enables the hand therapist to work with patients to hasten their return to a productive lifestyle.

Who is a candidate for Hand Therapy?



Patients who are candidates for hand therapy may have been affected by an accident or trauma leaving them with wounds, scars, burns, injured tendons or nerves, fractures, or even amputations of the fingers, hands, or arms. Others include patients who suffer from the effects of conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tennis elbow, as well as from such chronic problems as arthritis or a neurologic condition (i.e., stroke).

What does Hand Therapy Provide?

Preventative, Non-operative or conservative treatment

- Management of acute or chronic pain
- Desensitization following nerve injury or trauma
- Sensory re-education after nerve injury
- Design and implementation of home exercise programs to increase motion, dexterity, and/or strength
- Splint fabrication for prevention or correction of injury (see Figure 1)
- Training in the performance of daily life skills through adapted methods and equipment
- Conditioning prior to returning to work

Postoperative Rehabilitation may additionally include:

- Management of open or sutured wounds (prevention of infection and assistance in healing)
- Control of hypertrophic (raised and/or swollen) or hypersensitive scars
- Reduction of swelling
- Fabrication of orthoses to protect surgery or increase movement
- Instruction in home exercise program

Industry Consultation

Your hand therapist may consult with various industries establishing preventive programs for workers with upper extremity symptoms. Hand therapists recommend modifications of workstations and alternative work methods to help ensure healthy workstyles of all employees.

Find a Hand Therapist in your area

Search for a hand therapist in your area by going to www.asht.org. This is the official website of the American Society of Hand Therapists. Once there, click on "Consumers". You can search by city and state, last name or by CHT designation.

Figure 1: Examples of hand splints

