



## When to Call: Does your toddler need Occupational Therapy?

The primary goals of childhood are to grow, learn, and play. Play assists with the development of physical coordination, emotional maturity, social skills to interact with other children, and self-confidence to try new experiences and explore new environments. (AOTA, 2012) Sensory integration, social engagement, and motor skills are the foundation for both play and eating. Eating and playing are among the primary "jobs" or "occupations" of childhood. If you have a child who is 1 or 2 years old, take a minute to watch how he/she explores the environment, interacts with people, and uses his/her hands. Occupational therapists are experts in evaluating the skills that support participation in play and eating. **Call us today to schedule an evaluation if you have any concerns about how your child reacts to different experiences, uses his/her hands, or if you notice any of the following:**



### Difficulty holding or using objects

By one year of age, children have developed the ability to use the thumb and index finger to pick up small items like a Cheerio. They are able to put things into a container, turn pages of a book, hold a cup for drinking, and remove their own socks. Between 18 and 24 months, toddlers are stacking objects, sorting shapes, and scribbling with crayons. They begin to imitate by using toy instruments, telephones, and tools. For children who experience difficulty doing these kinds of things, an occupational therapist can provide interventions that build the required strength and coordination, help to select toys that provide just the right challenge for the child's current skill level, or modify toys or objects to promote successful interactions.



### Overly sensitive to sound, touch, or movement

Sensory integration involves perceiving and responding to different sensations. Some children can demonstrate extreme reactions to sources of stimulation that others consider mild or unnoticeable. This can cause a child to shut down or learn to avoid these situations completely. An occupational therapist can identify and modify barriers in the environment that limit a child's ability to participate in everyday activities. We can also provide adaptive sensory strategies to encourage full participation in family and peer-related activities and routines.



### Trouble eating foods of different textures

Although chewing is not fully mature yet, children between the ages of 1 and 2 typically cope with most food textures offered to them. There are many reasons a child may not be ready or willing to eat as many different textures and types of foods as other children of the same age. If eating seems to be an unpleasant or uncomfortable experience for a child, an occupational therapist can help to evaluate the underlying reasons and provide interventions to help a child eat successfully.