



American Society
of Hand Therapists™

WHAT IS A HAND THERAPIST?

▶ **A hand therapist is an occupational therapist (OT) or physical therapist (PT) who, through advanced study and experience, specializes in treating individuals with conditions affecting the hand and upper extremity.**

A QUALIFIED HAND THERAPIST can evaluate and treat any problem related to the upper extremity.

The hand therapist can effectively treat and rehabilitate the patient through post-operative rehabilitation; preventative, non-operative or conservative treatment; or industry consultation. The therapist works closely with the physician and patient to provide a continuum of care.

This often starts within days of the injury or surgery right through the patient's return to work and/or a productive lifestyle.

An upper extremity specialist may also have advanced certification as a Certified Hand Therapist (CHT).

A CHT is an OT or PT by profession with at least three years of experience, plus 4,000 hours of hand therapy practice (upper extremity rehabilitation). A CHT must have passed a certification examination that demonstrates knowledge of all areas of hand and upper extremity therapy before being granted the right to use the CHT designation. Hand therapists must renew their credential every five years through continued education and participation in hand and upper extremity therapy to continue using the CHT designation.

WHAT CAN I DO TO

BEGIN A CAREER

IN HAND THERAPY?

TO BECOME A HAND THERAPIST, you must have graduated from an accredited OT or PT program, passed a national registration exam and be licensed to practice as an occupational therapist or physical therapist in the state in which you work. You must also have a solid knowledge base in anatomy and physiology of the upper extremity, the stages of bone and tissue healing and the therapeutic interventions (including orthotic fabrication and fitting) used with this patient population. Clinical experience in evaluating and treating common hand and upper extremity conditions is also required.



Please see reverse for more information

HOW CAN I LEARN THE REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS?

GAINING THE REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE and skills may be difficult if you have not had experience treating patients with hand and upper extremity conditions. However, for a motivated individual with a passion for learning, obtaining these skills will be a rewarding path toward professional development. The American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT), a professional membership organization dedicated to the advancement of the practice of hand and upper extremity therapy, is a leader in developing resources to help you. ASHT student and new therapist member benefits include access to:

- **Student Resources:** Student Center, self-assessment examination, access to classic hand and upper extremity literature, information on how to start a hand therapy club, learning workbook, the Upper Extremity Institute (free for members)
- **Practice Management:** Best practice standards for the domain of hand and upper extremity therapy, resources for clinical practice, access to the ASHT Legislative Action Center that impacts hand and upper extremity therapy practice
- **Continuing Education:** ASHT Annual Meeting, Hand Therapy Review Course, Hands-On Orthotics workshops, Education on Tour traveling course, webinar series, Journal Club
- **Research:** Monthly online Journal Club discussion forum that supports evidence-based practice and provides clinically relevant case studies, practical support for new researchers, monthly research updates
- **e-Community:** Collaborate with fellow ASHT members, identify resources, share ideas, tap the knowledge and experience of your peers
- **Mentoring Program:** Mentoring resources, mentor matching, mentoring videos
- **Publications:** Annual subscription to the *Journal of Hand Therapy*, *ASHT Times* quarterly online magazine, *Clinical Assessment Recommendations, 3rd Edition*, new *Test Prep for the CHT Exam, 4th ed.*, *Advanced Concepts of Hand Pathology and Surgery*
- **Networking:** Searchable Find a Member Therapist online directory, Find a Clinic public directory
- **Careers:** Online career center for posting and searching jobs

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Complete an **internship or fellowship** in hand and upper extremity therapy
- **Establish a self-paced study course** in upper extremity anatomy and physiology
- **Find employment at a clinic** that provides hand and upper extremity rehabilitation services
- **Volunteer your time** to observe with other hand therapists within your community
- **Find a mentor** and engage in a mentoring relationship that will assist in improving your skills
- **Take continuing education courses** that address subject matter pertaining to upper extremity rehabilitation
- Join a local or regional **hand therapy group**

Become a member of ASHT – the only association dedicated to meeting the needs of hand and upper extremity therapists

» **Discounted, first-year introductory rate (\$30) for new student members.**



The following websites also contain helpful information, including learning communities, continuing education, mentoring and other resources that promote the hand and upper extremity therapy specialty:

- The American Society of Hand Therapists
ASHT.org
- The American Occupational Therapy Association
AOTA.org
- The American Hand Therapy Foundation (Scholarship Info)
AHTF.org
- The Hand Therapy Certification Commission
HTCC.org
- The American Physical Therapy Association (Hand Rehabilitation Academy)
APTA.org or handpt.org

