

When to ask for an Environmental Assessment

Our surroundings play a big role in how safely and comfortably we move through daily life. An environmental assessment helps identify barriers and opportunities within your home, school, or community so you can live more independently and confidently. Whether you're recovering from an injury, managing a disability, or noticing changes in mobility, an Occupational Therapist can help you make your space work better for you.

What is an environmental assessment?

- An environmental assessment is when an Occupational Therapist (OT) visits your home, school, workplace, or community setting to see how the space affects your daily activities.
- The OT looks at what's working well, what's getting in the way, and what changes could make things safer, easier, and more comfortable.
- Your OT may also review accessibility features, assistive technology, and equipment use to ensure your environment supports your goals and abilities.
- Assessments can be done in person or virtually, depending on your needs and situation.



Signs it might be time to ask for an assessment

You might benefit from an OT environmental assessment if you or someone you support:

- Has recently had a fall, trip, or near miss at home.
- Finds it difficult to move safely around their space (for example, tight corners, stairs, or cluttered walkways).
- Feels sore, tired, or unsteady doing daily tasks.
- Has noticed changes in vision, mobility, or balance.
- Has experienced difficulty using mobility aids or wheelchairs safely within the space.
- Finds it challenging to use assistive technology or communication devices in certain areas (for example, reaching power points or Wi-Fi coverage).
- Experiences sensory overload, distraction, or fatigue due to lighting, noise, visual clutter, or other environmental factors.
- Needs a more accessible layout for self-care tasks such as showering, toileting, or dressing.
- Has changes in cognitive or behavioural function that make it harder to navigate routines safely (for example, memory, attention, or emotional regulation).
- Requires support to participate more fully in community, school, or work environments.
- Is using temporary or unsuitable furniture, equipment, or housing arrangements that limit independence.
- Is recovering from surgery or returning home from hospital.
- Is moving into a new home, school, or supported living environment.
- Is transitioning to a new life stage (for example, ageing, post-injury, or returning to work).

How an OT can help

An Occupational Therapist can:

- Identify barriers in your environment that affect safety, comfort, or independence.
- Suggest simple, low-cost adjustments (like rearranging furniture or adding better lighting).
- Recommend assistive equipment or home modifications if needed.
- Support sensory comfort and regulation through lighting, layout, and environmental cues.
- Recommend technology or environmental controls to assist with communication or daily routines (for example, smart home devices, timers, or talking reminders).
- Liaise with builders, housing providers, or equipment suppliers to ensure modifications meet accessibility standards.
- Work with you, your carers, or your support coordinator to prioritise goals.
- Provide written reports for NDIS, My Aged Care, or housing support plans.

What to expect during an assessment

During the assessment, your OT will:

- Observe how you complete everyday activities.
- Ask about your routines, goals, and challenges.
- Identify potential risks or barriers.
- Suggest practical ways to improve safety and access.
- Provide clear recommendations you can start using straight away.
- Work collaboratively with your family, carers, or support staff to make sure recommendations are realistic and achievable.
- Consider your sensory preferences, mobility needs, and communication style throughout the assessment.

You'll receive tailored advice that fits your goals, lifestyle, and budget.



When to ask your OT

It's always okay to ask for advice early — you don't need to wait until something goes wrong.

Ask for a review if your environment or support needs have changed, for example, after getting new equipment, changing routines, or adjusting to a new diagnosis.

Regular check-ins with your OT can help prevent issues before they become barriers.

If you've noticed changes in how you move, feel, or manage tasks at home, reach out to your OT to discuss an environmental review.

Remember

- A few small changes can make a big difference to your comfort, safety, and independence.
- An environmental assessment is a proactive step toward living more confidently in the spaces that matter most to you.

For more information

- Visit: [BackToBasicsHealthGroup.com.au](https://www.backtobasicshealthgroup.com.au)
- Call: (03) 9763 7613