The American Hippotherapy Association (AHA) defines Hippotherapy as the method that occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech-language pathology professionals use evidence-based practice and clinical reasoning in the purposeful manipulation of equine movement to engage sensory, neuromotor, and cognitive systems to achieve functional outcomes. In conjunction with the affordances of the equine environment and other treatment strategies, Hippotherapy is part of a patient's integrated plan of care. Our Occupational Therapy program is offered to individuals age 2 and up.

The therapist selects a horse with the most ideal movement to match the specific needs of the client. During treatment, the therapist continually monitors the client's adaptive response and modifies equine movement to provide an appropriate challenge working towards functional goals.

Clients who participate in Occupational Therapy incorporating Hippotherapy are typically assisted by one to two sidewalkers to assist the therapist, as well as a horse leader. All Occupational Therapy sessions are conducted by an AHCB and HPCS Certified Occupational Therapist.

Hippotherapy is a medical treatment utilizing the purposeful manipulation of equine movement as a treatment strategy to address functional goals.

Physically, clients benefit because the movement of the horse's pelvis is similar to the movement of a human pelvis when walking, allowing for improved postural stability and mobility. Horses provide unique sensory input that can be, rhythmic, variable, and repetitive. As the client responds to the input, changes in function can occur; contributing to improvement in daily life skills.

The dynamic movement of the horse combined with the dynamic environment leads to functional change.
Hippotherapy Benefits:

For individuals with cerebral palsy
Utilizing the movement of the horse, clients with cerebral palsy can have significant improvement in muscle tone, posture, balance, trunk core strength, gross motor skills, and improved postural symmetry. When a client responds naturally to shifts in gait from the horse, it not only builds physical strength, but also vital connectivity in the brain.

For individuals with Down Syndrome
Hippotherapy is an effective treatment strategy for individuals with Down syndrome by using the horse’s motion to stimulate and enhance muscle contraction and postural control. Positive benefits also include increased muscle tone and improvement in mobility.

For individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
Hippotherapy can increase overall adaptive behaviors, such as receptive communication and coping. Improvements also include increased participation in self-care, social interaction, and sensory processing and regulation.

For individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI)
Using the movement of the horse can reignite their muscle memory, build core strength, and allow the client to practice verbal skills and breath support.

For individuals with Multiple Sclerosis
Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis can benefit from Hippotherapy to improve balance, activity tolerance, strength, spasticity, and quality of life.

Statistically significant outcomes related to Hippotherapy include improvements in a client’s balance, strength, mobility, gait, sensory processing and regulation, coordination, speech, language, communication, vocal intensity, and participation in daily activities.

There is widespread acceptance of occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy incorporating Hippotherapy within the medical community.

Referrals for treatment routinely come from physicians and other medical professionals.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) all recognize the use of Hippotherapy in treatment to be within the therapist’s scope of practice.

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one ride at a time

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