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What Are Activities of Daily Living?

As you begin to search for senior living communities, or as you wonder if your older loved one might even be appropriate for senior living, it can be difficult to find a way to determine what type of care or support your loved one might need. Fortunately, healthcare professionals and senior living communities use activities of daily living to help them assess how much support a resident might need, and if that senior would thrive in their community.

Knowing more about activities of daily living, or ADLs, can help you determine what type of support your loved one might need in order to feel their best and stay healthy.

What Are ADLs?

The [Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) defines ADLs as tasks related to personal care. Essentially, activities of daily living, or ADLs, are activities or tasks we all do to take care of ourselves each day. Activities of daily living include:

1. Dressing
2. Grooming, like brushing our teeth or our hair
3. Showering or bathing
4. Dressing
5. Transferring, or getting in and out of bed or a chair
6. Eating
7. Toileting, which includes incontinence management

Older adults can sometimes have challenges completing their ADLs without support or assistance due to chronic pain or stiffness that might come from arthritis, [cognitive decline that comes with dementia](#), or decreased mobility or energy. It can be quite helpful for family members to understand what type of assistance an older loved one needs to complete each ADL, as it can help them find the support they need.

What are IADLs?

Instrumental activities of daily living, or IADLs, are the tasks or activities someone needs to perform in order to live independently at home. Again, we all perform these tasks, but some older adults can find themselves needing extra support as they age. IADLs include:

1. Managing money, including paying bills on time and keeping up with a budget
2. Making healthcare appointments and going to those appointments
3. Safe medication management
4. Keeping up with chores around the house
5. Managing transportation, including scheduling transportation if the person no longer drives
6. Making meals, including grocery shopping and meal planning

Instrumental activities of daily living include complex cognitive skills, which means someone living in the early stage of dementia might struggle with these tasks before needing support with ADLs. Family members might also notice any deficiencies in keeping up with IADLs sooner, as they might see their loved one losing weight, taking the wrong medications, or bills piling up in the mailbox.