



Activities of Daily Living: What Are ADLs and IADLs?

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What are activities of daily living (ADLs)?

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are basic self-care tasks, akin to the kinds of skills that people usually learn in early childhood. They include feeding, toileting, selecting proper attire, grooming, maintaining continence, putting on clothes, Bathing, walking and transferring (such as moving from bed to wheelchair).

ADLs are often mentioned by geriatric-care professionals in connection with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs; see below), which are slightly more complex skills.

ADLs are occasionally referred to as basic activities of daily living (BADLs).

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What are instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)?

Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) are the complex skills needed to successfully live independently. These skills are usually learned during the teenage years and include the following:

- Managing finances

- Handling transportation (driving or navigating public transit)
- Shopping
- Preparing meals
- Using the telephone and other communication devices
- Managing medications
- Housework and basic home maintenance

Together, ADLs and IADLs represent the skills that people usually need to be able to manage in order to live as independent adults.

Doctors, rehabilitation specialists, geriatric social workers, and others in senior care often assess ADLs and IADLs as part of an older person's functional assessment. Difficulty managing IADLs is particularly common in early Alzheimer's and other dementias. Assessing IADLs can help guide a diagnostic evaluation, as well as determine what kind of assistance an older person may need on a day-to-day basis.

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