

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

What are they?

- ❖ According to the American Occupational Therapy Association (2014), activities of daily living, also referred to as ADLs, are self-care activities that focus on taking care of one's own body. These activities include bathing/showering, toileting and toilet hygiene, dressing, personal hygiene and grooming, swallowing/eating, feeding, functional mobility, personal device care, and sexual activity.
- ❖ The foundations for ADL performance begin as early as infancy and continue to mature throughout a child's development, making ADLs some of the most important childhood occupations (Shepherd, 2015).
- ❖ Participating in ADLs can have various benefits for children including, "...maintaining and improving bodily functions and health (e.g., strength, endurance, range of motion [ROM], coordination, memory, sequencing, concept formation, body image, cleanliness, hygiene) and problem solving while mastering tasks that are meaningful and purposeful to the child" (Shepherd, 2015, p. 417).
- ❖ For more information on ADLs, you can visit the following websites:
 - Verywell Health - <https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-are-adls-and-iadls-2510011>
 - Kid Sense - <https://childdevelopment.com.au/resources/child-development-charts/self-care-developmental-chart/>
 - Children's Therapy Solutions - <https://www.childrenstherapysolutions.co.uk/services/activities-of-everyday-living/>

What are signs of ADL deficits?

- ❖ Signs that a child may be experiencing challenges related to ADL performance and participation include (but are not limited to), frequent avoidance of participating in ADLs, emotional outbursts/tantrums surrounding/during ADL performance, increased levels of dependence for ADL tasks beyond what is expected given the child's age and task, need for frequent cues/reminders to complete or continue completing ADL tasks, pain or fatigue when during or after participation in ADLs, and/or reported/observable dissatisfaction with ADL performance.

How can ADL deficits impact occupational performance?

- ❖ As ADLs focus on self-care, it is likely that deficits in a child's ability to perform and participate in ADLs would impact participation and/or performance in other occupations including play, social participation, education, rest and sleep, leisure, and/or instrumental activities of daily living, or IADLs, such as cleaning/chores, taking care of pets, or following medication routines.

How can OTs help?

- ❖ Depending on the child's needs, an OT may work to promote independence and participation in occupations by:
 - Recommending and/or practicing using adaptive equipment for ADL participation
 - Adapting task and/or environment for dressing (i.e., larger buttons, eliminating distractions, etc.)
 - Using backward and/or forward chaining techniques
 - Using play-based activities to promote ADL skills (ex. dress-up clothes, dressing a doll, smocks, etc.)
 - Using an anticipatory problem solving approach and/or CO-OP approach (Shepherd, 2015)
 - Modifying ADL routines (i.e., reducing the number of tasks/steps, reducing assistance provided, etc.)
 - Collaborating with the child and parent/caregiver to educate on specific techniques and/or strategies

**Information above is not comprehensive and all treatment plans are specific to and depend on the needs of the child and are in no way limited to the examples provided above*

References

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2014). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd ed.). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 68, 51-548. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.682006>

Shepherd, J. (2015). Activities of daily living and sleep and rest. In J. Case-Smith & J. C. O'Brien (Eds.), *Occupational Therapy for Children and Adolescents* (7th ed., pp. 416-460). Elsevier Mosby.