

Activities of Daily Living

Age Cohorts	Older
Surveys	Surveys 1, 2, 3, 4
Derived Variable	
Definition	Generic help with activities of daily living
Source Items (index numbers)	
Statistical form	Categorical variable
Index number	

Age cohorts	Older
Surveys	Old 4
Derived variable	
Definition	Difficulty with activities of daily living
Source items (index numbers)	
Statistical form	Categorical variable
Index number	
Definition	Need help with specific activities of daily living
Source items (index numbers)	
Statistical form	Categorical variable
Index number	
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Source items

Generic help with activities of daily living

The generic question used in all OLD surveys is “Do you regularly NEED help with daily tasks because of long-term illness, disability or frailty (*eg. personal care, getting around, preparing meals etc.*)?”

Code	Response
	Yes
	No

This question is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1993 Survey on Disability, Ageing and Carers.

Need help with specific activities of daily living

The more specific questions used in OLD 4 were designed to measure two constructs, difficulty and dependence. The two questions ask respondents about eight basic (or personal) activities of daily living (grooming, eating, bathing, dressing upper body, dressing lower body, getting up from chair, walking, toileting) and eight extended (or instrumental) activities of daily living (shopping, light housework, heavy housework, managing money, preparing meals, medications, telephone, leisure). In the first question, respondents are asked the degree of ‘difficulty’ associated with performing the activities. This question is designed to identify difficulty as opposed to dependence, ie. a woman may have difficulty doing a task but not be dependent upon another person for assistance. The second

question assesses dependence (or help required from another person) to perform the tasks. Together, the two constructs paint a fuller picture of the continuum of disability.¹ The questions and response options were informed by Gill.¹

The presence of 'difficulty with' but not 'dependence in' task performance may identify a pre-clinical, intermediate phase of disablement, which may predict future disablement², death and increased use of health services.¹

Difficulty question "In the last month HAVE YOU HAD ANY DIFFICULTY (for example, needing to take extra time, changing the activity or using a device to help you) in completing any of these activities?"

Grooming (eg brushing hair, applying make-up)

Eating (eg cutting meat, lifting glass or cup, opening milk carton)

Bathing or taking a shower

Dressing your upper body

Dressing your lower body

Getting up from a chair

Walking inside the house

Using the toilet

Shopping for personal items or groceries

Doing light housework (eg cleaning, washing-up)

Doing heavy housework (eg vacuuming, yard work)

Managing money (eg writing cheques or keeping accounts)

Preparing meals

Taking medications

Using the telephone

Doing leisure activities or hobbies

Code	Response
	No difficulty
	Some difficulty
	Unable to do

Dependence Question “In the last month have you needed HELP FROM ANOTHER PERSON to carry out any of these activities?”

Code	Response
	Yes
	No

Scoring

Scores are created for each activity by assigning

- 0 no difficulty
- 1 for difficulty but no help required
- 2 help required

Summary ADL scores for the eight basic ADLs range from 0 – 16.

Summary IADL scores for the eight extended IADLs range from 0 – 16.

¹ Gill T, Robison J, Tinetti M. Difficulty and dependence: Two components of the disability continuum among community-living older persons. *Ann Int Med* 1998;128(2):96-101.

² Fried L, Bandeen-Roche K, Chaves P, Johnson B. Preclinical disability predicts incident mobility disability in older women. *J Gerontol* 2000;55A(1):M43-M52.