



At Arbor Springs we are dedicated to helping families manage the realities of dementia with as much love, dignity, and knowledge as possible. This monthly e-newsletter is our way of offering helpful tips and insights that will hopefully make your days with your loved one a little easier, happier, and calm.

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are basic self-care activities that need to be accomplished on a regular basis to function. Examples of ADLs include bathing, dressing, grooming, eating, dental care, and toileting.

Alzheimer's disease and other kinds of dementia often make performing ADLs difficult. This is because several of the brain functions required to perform ADLs are impacted by dementia.

Executive Functioning: Sequencing, planning, and organizing a multi-step activity can be very difficult. That is why it's not uncommon to see people put clothing on in the wrong order, such as putting a bra on over one's shirt.

Memory: The person with dementia may forget to do a task altogether or he/she may forget how to perform an individual task. For instance, he/she may not remember to put clean clothes on in the morning.

Judgment: Poor decision-making skills can impact ADLs. In the middle of winter, someone with dementia might decide he doesn't need a winter coat or shoes.

Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia: Dementia can affect personality and behavior such that the person may resist assistance with ADLs. She might become fearful or angry at your "meddling" because she doesn't understand that she needs assistance with a shower or dressing.

As Alzheimer's disease progresses there is a steady deterioration of abilities including the capacity to perform his/her activities of daily living. Unfortunately this trend cannot be reversed, it is the nature of the disease. We can, however, help to make these daily activities easier, or at least more do-able, by utilizing the following tips:

- 1) Establish and maintain a routine. The basic activities of daily living should be part of a routine, done at the same time and in the same order each day. Try to complete the ADL care during the person's "best" time of day. This is when cognitive ability is at its highest. For person's with dementia this time is usually in the morning, but it may vary.

- 2) Allow plenty of time for the individual to complete the task. Remember that it takes time for

a person with dementia to process information so do not rush him/her. Rushing only adds stress for both of you.

- 3) Encourage independence as much as possible. Give encouragement and support as he or she completes tasks. Acknowledge his/her efforts when completed, "You did a nice job brushing your hair." This will help promote a sense of accomplishment.
- 4) Demonstrate the task you want the person to perform. For example, mimic the use of a toothbrush.
- 5) Simplify the task. Provide one direction at a time. When assisting the individual with dressing, lay out clothing in the order he/she will put it on.
- 6) Take a break if it's not going well and try again later. Always remember to decide what's really important and let the rest go.

By following some of these care tips with ADLs, you will help prevent frustration for both you and your loved one. Moreover, you will improve his quality of life by prolonging his independence, while ultimately making him feel productive.

In upcoming issues we will discuss individual ADLs (bathing, dressing, grooming, etc.) and specific care tips for each one. In the meantime, if you have specific questions that you would like answered please reach out to Monica Kuehl, RN, BSN, Director of Marketing/Admissions @ m.kuehl@arborsprings.org or 515-223-1135 and I'll do my best to get to them all.