

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING AND CHRONIC PAIN

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are the basic actions involved in caring for yourself and your body. They include personal care, mobility, and eating. Unfortunately, chronic pain can make some of these tasks difficult, or even impossible, to complete without assistance. People with pain of all ages can experience these difficulties.

A person with pain can experience difficulties with activities of daily living due to flare-ups, soreness, stiffness, fatigue, sensory changes, and more. If you are concerned about your ability to take part in activities of daily living, you can ask your health care provider to complete an assessment and provide guidance on how you might be able to get help, such as home support services.

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING IMPACTED BY CHRONIC PAIN

- Showering and bathing
- Hand-washing
- Toileting
- Grooming: Teeth-brushing and flossing, shaving, hair-brushing, applying make-up
- Changing clothes
- Getting in and out of bed
- Eating
- Basic mobility around the home

The loss of routine and personal autonomy can bring up uncomfortable emotions. Feelings associated with embarrassment, grief, and frustration are common. However, there are strategies, tools, devices, and services available to assist with these adjustments and can help you reclaim your sense of independence.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS CAN RECOMMEND APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

- Occupational therapists (OTs) are health care professionals who will come to your home to assess your needs and make equipment or home adaptation recommendations. They can also assess whether you would benefit from home support with activities of daily living.
- OTs can provide information on strategies such as pacing and energy conservation to enable you to be as independent as possible.
- You can self-refer to request an OT assessment for free in your home by phoning your community home health office.

- For more information about OT's visit the information sheet "[Finding an Occupational Therapist to Manage Chronic Pain](#)"

TOOLS AND PRODUCTS TO ASSIST WITH ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

- Dry shampoo
- Waterless cleansing wipes
- Long-handled shower brush and hairbrush
- Shower chair or tub transfer bench
- Electric toothbrush
- Toothpaste with a pump and flossing picks
- Individual sheets of toilet paper or long handled wiping device
- Anti-fatigue mats and/or chairs to make tasks more comfortable

People having difficulties with activities of daily living may experience falls in the home and community. In addition to in-home adaptations and mobility equipment, individuals may consider obtaining a personal emergency response system (fee-based), such as a Lifeline to maintain independence and remain safe in their home.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM PROVIDERS

- Lifeline: www.lifeline.ca/en
- Medical Alert System: www.telus.com/en/personal-health/medical-alert-systems
- Life Assure: info.lifeassure.com/devices/alerts/seniors

EXAMPLES OF HOME ADAPTATIONS TO ASSIST WITH ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Note: Please refer to your OT assessment for guidance before purchasing or installing any of the following home adaptations.

- **Stair lifts** to access all levels and rooms of the home.
- **Walk-in bathtubs** are more accessible than stepping into a regular bathtub. Many walk-in bathtubs also have built-in seats for increased accessibility.
- **Grab bars for the shower and bathtub** to safely enter and exit avoid slips and falls. They also provide support for adjusting your position and managing fatigue while washing.

- **Raised toilet seat with side rails** lessens the distance you need to lower yourself onto a toilet, while the side rails provide stability.
- **Handheld shower heads** are great for washing and rinsing while seated and for rinsing hard to reach areas.
- **Lever sink handles** are easier to turn than regular handles.

Many types of home adaptations can be costly. There are home improvement grants and programs available to help with these costs. Below are some of the available home improvement and adaptation grants and programs:

- Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations (BC RAHA): www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/BC-RAHA/program-overview#:~:text=What%20is%20BC%20RAHA%3F,rebates%20to%20complete%20home%20adaptations
- Home renovation tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/income-taxes/personal/credits/seniors-renovation
- On-Reserve Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP): www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST WITH ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

- **Home support (Ministry of Health)** - Home support services help people remain independent and to live in their own home as long as possible. They are direct care services provided by community health workers to clients who require personal assistance with **activities of daily living**. www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/home-support
- **Assisted living services (Ministry of Health)** - Assisted living services provide housing, hospitality services and regulated assisted living services for adults who can live independently and make decisions on their own behalf but require a supportive environment due to physical and functional health challenges. www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/assisted-living
- **Private home care workers and companies** - Depending on whether someone is eligible for home support through the Ministry of Health or based on personal preferences, they may consider accessing private home support services.

It's important to note, home support services through the Ministry of Health do not cover the following: extensive meal preparation, housekeeping, yardwork, grocery pickup, or prescription pickup. Please see below for a list of service examples that can help with these services.

- **Better at Home** – Better at Home is a program that helps seniors with simple non-medical, day-to-day tasks so they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities. betterathome.ca
- **Private home care workers and companies**
- **Private housekeeping/cleaning workers and companies**

For support with finding local private home care or housekeeping/ cleaning services, please contact the Pain Support Line at 1-833-261-PAIN or email supportline@painbc.ca.

RESOURCES

- What are activities of daily living? www.bcsla.ca/blog/what-are-activities-of-daily-living/
- Learning about activities of daily living: myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/aftercareinformation/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=abk6226
- Assistive ideas for self-care in the bathroom: www.painscale.com/article/assistive-ideas-for-self-care-in-the-bathroom
- How showering can worsen symptoms of fibromyalgia and ME/CFS: www.verywellhealth.com/problems-showering-chronic-fatigue-syndrome-3973041
- Impairment in activities of daily living: www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/health-support/physical-health-and-wellness/compensation-illness-injury/disability-benefits/benefits-determined/table-of-disabilities/ch-19-2006
- How can chronic pain cause poor dental hygiene? lewisstatesdental.com/blog/how-chronic-pain-affects-your-oral-health
- Services that help with daily living such as meal preparation, home maintenance, or personal grooming: www.heartandstroke.ca/services-and-resources/personal-care
- Home renovation tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities: www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/income-taxes/personal/credits/seniors-renovation
- Home support services: www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/home-support
- Assisted living services: www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/assisted-living