

Living Your Best with a Chronic Condition

Your Mind-Body Wellness

Living with a chronic illness is a daily challenge. When you have a chronic medical condition (long-term or lifelong), the activities of daily living can become more complex. The complications of your illness overlay all the other challenges in life. They can easily affect your mental health and your quality of life. And they are there every day.

Millions of people have to deal with complex medical conditions over a long term. This can include cancer, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, arthritis, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis and many other such conditions. Whether your illness is long-standing or newly diagnosed, there are many things you can do to improve your quality of life.

In this issue of *Your Source*, you'll learn how to:

- Improve your ability to manage life with your chronic medical condition.
- Confront and deal with depression that can accompany chronic illness.
- Access resources that can help you meet your challenges.

Having a positive attitude is a step in the right direction. It can have a positive impact on how you look at life, how you see things around you and how you handle the situations you are faced with. Although you can't always control what happens to you, you can control your attitude toward life events.

Go online today! Log on to access *Living Your Best with a Chronic Condition* and other helpful resources in the Spotlight section. Share this with your co-workers and family members.



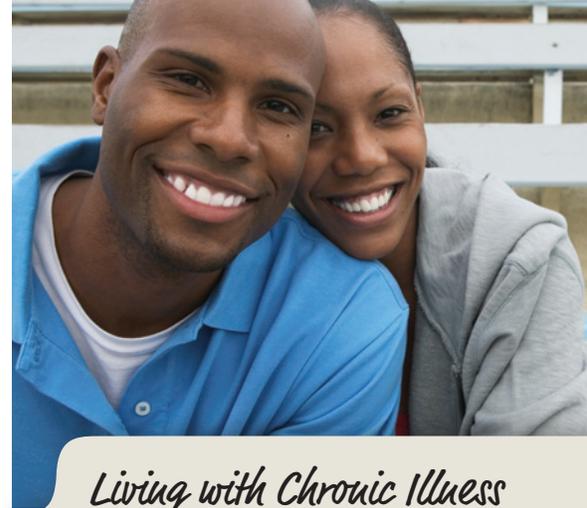
Employee Assistance Program

1-800-478-2812

For TTY Users: 1-800-456-4006



Log on here!



Living with Chronic Illness

A chronic medical condition may seem like it has taken control of your life. But there are steps you can take to improve your well-being.

On the physical health side:

- Keep regular appointments and maintain good communication with your doctor(s).
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed.
- Do any testing (such as labs, imaging) that your doctor recommends. Discuss the results with him or her.
- Report changes in your condition to your doctor.
- Build a program of exercise that you enjoy into your daily schedule.

On the mental health side:

- Don't let the illness define you. Continue to pursue personal goals. Take part in whatever activities you can that have meaning for you.
- Remember that you will have many ups and downs in dealing with your condition. Don't be hard on yourself when you have setbacks.
- Remember to laugh. Humor can be great for mental health.
- See a doctor or counselor if you think you might be depressed. Treatment works!

How to Cope with Depression Along with a Chronic Condition

A chronic medical condition is something that will be present for a very long time. It may never be cured. In response, the many changes that occur in a person's life often trigger depression. This can mean sadness, hopelessness, sleep loss, appetite loss and other such symptoms.

Depression can be successfully treated, and this can improve your physical condition.

Although it is not always identified, depression is very common in people with chronic conditions. As many as one-third of people with serious medical conditions also have depression. And a difficult cycle can develop. The illness can spur periods of depression, which can then lead to a less healthy physical condition. This in turn can make treatment less effective.

Treatment Helps Both Illnesses

Depression can be effectively treated even when you are undergoing complex care for a chronic illness. The difficult cycle can be broken. People with a chronic illness who get treated for their depression often see improvement in their overall medical condition. Their quality of life typically improves. They have more success with their treatment plan.

Steps for Receiving the Right Treatment

If you have a chronic condition, getting the right treatment for your depression is important.

- **Start by learning about depression.** Your program can help you better understand depression.
- **Seek out professional help for support and guidance.** This person should be aware of your medical condition and can help you cope and address your depression or anxiety.
- **Take your medicines as prescribed.** Treatment for depression can take several weeks to show results. If your provider prescribes antidepressants, do not stop taking your medications without first talking to your provider or doctor.

Getting Help

If you have a chronic illness and think that you may also be suffering from depression, call your health care provider or your program's toll-free number. Getting help can benefit all aspects of your life.

Which statement about co-existing conditions is false?

- A. About 25 percent of people with diabetes also suffer with depression.
- B. About 25 percent of people who have had a heart attack also suffer with depression.

Answer B is false. While depression does occur in about 25 percent of diabetic individuals, it occurs even more in those who have had a heart attack—anywhere from 40 to 65 percent of these individuals. Regardless of the illness, treatment for both conditions at the same time is very important.

- From the Cleveland Clinic.

Now That's an Idea!

Managing Your Health Better

If you're having trouble starting an exercise program, begin with walking. Walking is free and easy. It can be a great place to start.

Give your providers the whole picture—it can make a big difference. If you think you might be depressed, don't shy away from telling your medical doctor.

Consider reorganizing your home and work routines. Making small adjustments throughout the day to fit around your illness can help you stay in charge.

Tap into your organization's program. You'll get helpful information on how to cope with your stress, depression, and more.

