



Self-Management of Chronic Illnesses

Self-management of chronic illness means that you take an active role in managing your health. Self-management involves making lifestyle choices, changes and using prescribed medical treatments to be as healthy as possible.

In self-management, you should view your doctors as your partners. Be proactive and educate yourself about your condition. Ask your doctors for their advice and information about how to deal with your illness. Work with your doctor to develop an “action plan” on how to manage your condition on your own. While your doctor can provide you with the tools necessary to help manage your disease, it is important that you take responsibility for implementing these actions.

Make a Specific Plan with your Health Care Provider

The plan should contain all of the following steps:

Discuss with your doctor exactly what you are going to do. What kind of foods will you eat, what type of exercise is best, how often will you visit your doctor?

How much will you do? Will you reduce your fat intake? Practice yoga twice a week? When will you do this?

How often will you do your planned activities? In the morning? At the end of the day? Four times a week?

Discuss anticipated barriers and concerns. What life style factors might get in the way of this action plan?

Discuss potential solutions for barriers. Brainstorm ways to help overcome these barriers.

Check your confidence level. Ask yourself, “How confident am I that I’ll be able to meet this goal?” If you are not confident, talk to your doctor about setting more realistic goals.

Follow-up plan. When, where and how will you check in with your doctor?

Self-Management Programs

There are self-management programs available in communities throughout the United States that are designed to help you gain self-confidence in your ability to control your symptoms. These workshops are highly interactive and focus on building skills and sharing goals. NCOA supports a variety of self-care programs throughout the United States including Stanford’s Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, Living Well with Chronic Conditions, Enhance Fitness, Matter of Balance, Healthy IDEAS and Active Living Everyday. For more information, please visit www.healthyagingprograms.org.

Additional Resources

Stanford Patient Education Resource Center: <http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/>

Enhance Fitness: <http://www.projectenhance.org/>

Matter of Balance: http://www.mmc.org/mh_body.cfm?id=432

Active Living Everyday: <http://www.activeliving.info/TakeCourse.cfm>