

Chronic Disease

Improving Your Health with Self-Management Education Programs

Chronic diseases are illnesses that last 3 months or longer. They are a part of many older Americans' lives. Most people age 65 and over have more than one chronic disease. Common chronic diseases affecting older adults include heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and depression.

Self-Management

Managing your chronic diseases effectively means you:

- Know about and understand your diseases
- Communicate effectively with your health care professionals
- Manage appointments with multiple doctors and other health care providers
- Follow sometimes competing treatment recommendations
- Make lifestyle changes
- Cope with conditions that may limit physical activity or cause emotional strain

Self-Management Education Programs

Research shows that certain educational programs can help older Americans learn how to self-manage their conditions. One of the best programs is the Chronic Disease Self-

Management Program. This program involves two leaders who typically have one or more chronic diseases themselves. Together they lead workshops for 8-12 participants using strategies like:

- Action planning and feedback
- Problem-solving methods
- Decision-making
- Symptom management methods including relaxation, healthy eating, sleep and fatigue monitoring, medication management, exercise, and improved communication with providers, family, and friends.

Research shows that people who participate in these programs see significant improvements related to their:

- Exercise
- Symptoms, like pain and fatigue
- Psychological health
- Communication with physicians
- Participation in activities

Take Steps to Manage Your Chronic Disease

The Administration for Community Living supports organizations across the country that offer the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and its variations, including programs specifically designed for people with diabetes, chronic pain, and HIV. Workshops are also available in Spanish and other languages.

[Find a Chronic Disease Self-Management Program near you.](#)

Participate in a self-management program and take charge of your health!

Last Updated: July 2018