



Getting Engaged with a Chronic Condition

As the school year is coming to an end and summer is fast approaching, it may be a good time to engage with our overall health and wellbeing, namely engaging with a chronic condition. It can be extremely difficult to manage a chronic health condition, but for most of us there are resources and help available. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographic/chronic-diseases.htm>), 6 in 10 adults in the US have a chronic disease and 4 in 10 have two or more. How can we all get more engaged so we all get healthier?

What is a disease management program?

Health insurance plans secured through our employment or purchased on an individual basis have disease management included within them for our benefit. Most health insurance carriers engage with their members that they know have a specific chronic disease that they are managing. Often times, it is important for all of us to seek what additional support and management is available to help us get a chronic disease more under control. A disease management program strives to help you better manage your chronic condition. This can include keeping up with medication, seeing your doctor regularly, seeking additional treatments, or implementing lifestyle changes that can help improve your daily life, prevent future health issues, or reduce your symptoms.

If you've been identified from your health insurer as someone who would benefit from such a program, you'll often be contacted by a program representative from your insurance company to get started. Enrolling in a disease management program can help you live a healthier life and remove some of the burden associated with managing your chronic condition.

List of Common Chronic Diseases:

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- COPD
- Crohn disease
- Diabetes (types 1 and 2)
- Epilepsy
- Heart disease
- Depression

What else can be done?

In addition to following your prescribed treatment method, you should also consider making healthy lifestyle changes. Some ideas include the following:

- Eat healthy. Your body needs the right vitamins, minerals and other nutrients to stay in good shape. A healthy diet means you are eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk products, fish, poultry, lean meats, eggs, beans, and nuts. Stay away from cholesterol-laden items, excessive sodium, and added sugars. It is also important to avoid trans and saturated fats.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity is linked to an increased risk of developing chronic conditions. Talk to your doctor to determine your healthiest weight and, if necessary, a weight-loss program that is right for you.
- Don't smoke. Smoking harms almost every organ in your body and greatly reduces your overall health. Quitting or refraining from smoking can help you avoid developing or better manage your chronic condition.
- Limit alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption is a risk factor for many chronic conditions and diseases. Speak with your doctor to determine how much you should limit your consumption of alcohol.
- Exercise regularly. Lack of exercise is a primary cause of chronic conditions. To improve overall cardiovascular health, the American Heart Association (AHA) suggests at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise (or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity). The AHA also suggests adding moderate- to high-intensity strength training at least twice a week for additional health benefits.

For More Information

If you'd like more information on disease management programs, please connect with customer service with your current health plan insurer. They can help get you connected to the additional support and services to help manage chronic conditions.

Important Disclaimer: We strongly recommend connecting with a licensed professional for an assessment of any employee benefit coverages and offerings.



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