

Chronic Health Conditions: Taking an Active Role in Your Care



Your healthcare provider will work with you to set up a treatment plan. The plan may include medicines. It might also include ways to find emotional support. To feel more healthy and in control, do your best to follow your plan.



Talk with your healthcare provider

To make the most of your office visits, try these tips:

- **Bring a list of questions.** Make a list of things you want to talk about, such as new treatments. Let your healthcare provider know you have questions. Don't be afraid to ask them. Write down what your provider says.
- **Keep a record of any changes.** Write down any changes in your condition and in how you feel. Bring this to office visits.
- **Ask about other health services.** Ask about seeing other providers, such as dietitians or physical therapists.
- **Ask about complementary care.** Ask if it may help to try things such as acupuncture or herbs.
- **Bring a trusted family member or friend with you.** That person can help you understand and remember what you heard. They can also take notes for you. Then you can focus on talking with the provider.

Take your medicines

Learn about the medicines you take. For the best results, do the following:

- **Talk with your pharmacist.** Ask your pharmacist if there are some foods, herbs, supplements, or medicines you shouldn't have while taking your medicine. This could include medicines you buy over the counter, such as aspirin. It may also include vitamins and herbs. Write the information down.
- **Read labels.** Use medicines only as directed. Don't skip doses. Don't increase or decrease the dose. Talk with your provider before you stop taking any medicines.
- **Don't share your medicines.** Don't share medicines or take them from another person, even if it's the

same medicine and dose.

- **Be aware of side effects.** Tell your healthcare provider about any side effects. There may be other medicines you can try.
- **Store medicines correctly.** Some are affected by heat or light.
- **Check the cost.** Ask your health insurer about buying medicines through the mail. Or check with groups that focus on your condition. They may know other ways to save on costs.
- **Keep an updated list of your medicines.** Keep this list in your wallet or on your electronic device. Give the list to your partner or a friend. That way, there's a backup in case of an emergency.

Recognize your feelings

When you're coping with a health problem, it's normal to be sad or depressed at times. Some medicines can also affect your mood. But tell someone if these feelings don't go away. Depression can be treated.

If you choose, share what you learn about your condition with the people in your life. Think about asking family members to come with you to a support group meeting. Learning more about your condition can ease their concerns. And it can make it easier for them to support you.

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