



# Living with a Chronic Condition

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## KEY POINTS

- Chronic conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, or arthritis are common in the United States, affecting 6 in 10 adults.
- If you have a chronic condition it's important to eat well, stay active, and follow your treatment plan. These steps can help you feel well and avoid complications.



## Get regular care and stick to your treatment plan

Once you've decided on a treatment plan with your doctor, make sure you understand their instructions about when and how to take medicines, what equipment you'll need, and other important details. Stick to your treatment plan and ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

- **Take your medicines as prescribed.** Taking the right dose at the right time and in the right way is essential for managing your chronic conditions.
- **Monitor your health at home.** Some treatment plans include checking your [blood sugar](#), [blood pressure](#), or other health numbers on a regular basis. Be sure to stay on schedule and reach out to your doctor if anything looks wrong. Let your health care team know about new or worsening symptoms or other changes that concern you. For example, if you are getting chemotherapy for cancer, you are more likely to get infections because of a weakened immune system. If you think you have an infection, call your doctor right away—even if this happens in the middle of the night. Learn more about how to [prevent infections](#).
- **Schedule regular checkups with your doctor.** Chronic diseases can affect your body in many different ways, so it's important to schedule regular appointments to make sure your treatment plan is working. Talk with your doctor to decide how often you should be going in for checkups.

## SEE ALSO

[Why You Need to Take Your Medicines As Prescribed or Instructed](#)

## Learn more about your condition and how to manage it

If you have a chronic disease, learning how to solve problems and make informed decisions about your health can empower you to live a healthier life. Self-management education (SME) programs can help you learn skills to manage symptoms of your condition, improve your eating and sleeping habits, reduce stress, and maintain a healthy lifestyle. [Diabetes self-management education and support services](#) are one example of SME that is designed to improve blood sugar levels, reduce complications, and improve overall health.

### SME for Older Adults



[Chronic disease self-management programs](#) can help older adults gain control of their symptoms and live their daily life. Use the [Eldercare Locator](#) to find organizations in your area and ask if they offer these programs.

[Eldercare Locator](#)

# Get regular physical activity and eat well

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## Stay active

Physical activity is one of the best things you can do to improve your health. If you have a chronic disease, regular activity can help you manage your condition and prevent complications. Staying active can:

- Immediately help you feel, function, and sleep better.
- Help you stay independent and fit so you can complete daily tasks.
- Help you control your weight.
- Improve your mental health.
- Decrease pain and improve function if you have arthritis.

Adults with chronic health conditions or disabilities who are able should try to meet federal recommendations for physical activity: at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week, plus 2 days a week of muscle-strengthening activities.

If you're not able to meet these guidelines, remember that some activity is better than no activity. Work with your doctor to set physical activity goals that match your abilities.

### KEEP READING

[Being Active With Chronic Health Conditions: An Overview](#)

## Eat healthy foods

Only 1 in 10 adults eats the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables. Healthy eating is a large part of managing chronic diseases and preventing complications.

According to the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025](#) [PDF](#) [↗](#) a healthy eating plan:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Includes a variety of protein foods, such as seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), soy products, nuts, and seeds.
- Is low in [added sugars](#), [sodium](#), saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol.
- Stays within your daily calorie needs.

USDA's [MyPlate Plan](#) [↗](#) can help you identify what and how much to eat from the different food groups to stay within your recommended calorie allowance. You can also download [My Food Diary](#) [PDF](#) to help track your meals.

### KEEP READING

[Tips for Healthy Eating for a Healthy Weight](#)

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### SOURCES

### CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#)