**What are chronic diseases ?**

The National Center for Health Statistics has defined chronic diseases as those that persist for 3 months or longer or belong to a group of conditions that are considered chronic (e.g., diabetes), regardless of when they began. Although some (e.g., polymyalgia rheumatica, depression) may resolve, most are lifelong diseases

**Chronic illnesses can be characterized by the stage**

1. **Early-Stage Chronic Illnesses:** Cause little or no functional impairment, impose a low burden on others. This often characterizes certain chronic illnesses early after their diagnosis or in their uncomplicated stages. high self-management burden. Example include uncomplicated diabetes, mild asthma or osteoarthritis
2. **Moderate-Stage Chronic Illnesses :** Moderate, as opposed to low, degree of functional impairment and disability. Moderate to high self-management and caregiver burden. and moderate to high economic impact. Examples include painful hip or knee osteoarthritis and stage 2 or 3 Parkinson’s disease
3. **Late-Stage Chronic Illnesses :** Those that are slowly or rapidly progressive or terminal and are characterized by high functional impairment and disability and self or caregiver management burden. May suffer a rapidly progressive decline in multiple functions

**Chronic illnesses can cause functional impairment or disability through any of the three following health pathways**:

1. **Directly causing impairment or disability** : Example : Osteoarthritis causes impairment or disability directly through reduced mortality or pain in such joints as the knee or hip.
2. **Causing other medical complications that lead to impairment and disability:** Diabetes can lead to impairment and disability indirectly, such as its effects on blood vessels. For example, visual impairment
3. **Causing mental health complications that lead to impairment and disability :** Example : Cardiovascular disease are associated with an increased risk of developing depression which which have an adverse effect on health behaviors, leading to increased risk of clinical complications