

If

you are diagnosed with a **chronic health condition**, an **important first step** is to **learn all you can about the condition** from your doctor, other health care providers and other sources, like the member agencies of **Community Health Charities of Maryland**.

**Health Matters at Work**® can help with comprehensive health information you can access anytime at [www.healthmattersatwork.org](http://www.healthmattersatwork.org).

Health Matters  
at work

## Living Well with Chronic Disease

If you have a chronic health condition – or a loved one who is chronically ill – you know that **chronic disease can affect virtually every aspect of your life** and every relationship.

When you don't feel well, you can lack the energy to work to your full capacity or to perform even routine household tasks for your family. You may worry about the cost of your care and resent the time it takes to travel to appointments, schedule office visits and contact your insurance carrier with questions.

Even when your disease is under control, you are aware that it could flare up without warning. You might worry about the possibility of serious complications or wonder whether medication to treat your disease could cause other damage.

The ongoing challenge of living with chronic disease is to acknowledge the seriousness of your condition and to maintain the best possible health while fighting to keep the disease from becoming the sole focus of your life. People sometimes put it this way: **"I may have a chronic disease, but it doesn't have me."**

## Partner with Your Doctor

When you have a chronic disease, it is vital to develop and maintain an honest and open relationship with your doctor and other health professionals who provide you with care.

- Keep a journal of your symptoms and how you feel. Take your journal and a written list of specific questions with you each time you visit your doctor.
- Learn about your medications, the reason for taking them and any side effects you might have. Discuss them with your doctor and pharmacist. Do not change what medications you take or how you take them without consulting your doctor.



## Take Care of Yourself

- Be honest with yourself and others. Say "No" to tasks you know you can't handle and accept or ask for help when you need it.
- It is normal to grieve the loss of your "old" self, so come to terms with your disease rather than denying it.

## Stay Engaged

- Join a support group or chat online. It will help remind you that you are not alone.
- Continue to pursue hobbies and other activities that give you pleasure.



  
**Community  
Health Charities**®  
Maryland  
WORKING FOR A HEALTHY AMERICA

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