

Living Well with Chronic Conditions (Chronic Disease Self-Management Program)

The **Living Well with Chronic Conditions Program** is a workshop conducted once a week, for six weeks, in community settings such as senior centers, churches, libraries and hospitals. People with different chronic health problems attend together. Workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are non-health professionals with chronic diseases themselves.

What happens in a workshop?

Workshop groups meet once a week for six weeks. There are typically ten to sixteen participants in each workshop and participants learn how to:

- deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation,
- exercise appropriately for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance,
- use medications appropriately,
- communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals,
- eat healthy,
- make good decisions,
- evaluate new treatments

Classes are highly participative, where mutual support and success build the participants' confidence in their ability to manage their health and maintain active and fulfilling lives.

What does it cost to attend?

It is free of charge for participants and each one will receive a copy of *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions, 4th Edition*, and an audio relaxation CD, *Relaxation for Mind and Body*. Registration is required.

Who leads the workshops?

The workshops are led by two leaders who have received special training. The leaders are volunteers, many living with chronic conditions themselves.

Does the Program replace existing programs and treatments?

The Self-Management Program will not conflict with existing programs or treatment. It is designed to enhance regular treatment and disease-specific education such as cardiac rehabilitation, or diabetes instruction. In addition, many people have more than one chronic condition. The program is especially helpful for these people, as it gives them the skills to coordinate all the things needed to manage their health, as well as to help them keep active in their lives.

How was the Program developed?

The Division of Family and Community Medicine in the School of Medicine at Stanford University conducted research to develop and evaluate a community-based self-management program that assists people with chronic illness. The study was completed in 1996. The Stanford Patient Education Research Center moved in 2018! Since 2018 the Self-Management Resource Center (SMRC) remains dedicated to helping improve health status and self-management skills.

What were the results?

Participants, who took the program, when compared to those who did not, demonstrated significant improvements in exercise, cognitive symptom management, communication with physicians, self-reported general health, health distress, fatigue, disability, and social/role activities limitations. They also spent fewer days in the hospital, and there was also a trend toward fewer outpatient visits and hospitalizations. Many of these results persist for as long as three years.

Who should attend Living Well workshops?

We recommend that nearly everyone with a chronic condition be referred to a workshop. Anyone who is at least 18 years old with one or more chronic conditions is eligible to attend provided that they have good mental functioning and are able to get to the workshop. The workshop is beneficial for people even if they have been coping with their condition for many years. Caregivers of family members of people living with chronic conditions benefit from the program and are also encouraged to attend. Many people have more than one chronic condition and the program is especially helpful for these people, as it gives them the skills to better coordinate their care.

All workshops are currently free of charge, six weeks in length and meet once a week for 2 ½ hours at various locations throughout the county. Each participant will receive a manual and relaxation CD following completion of the workshop.

Interested individuals should call Lily Hilferty (CCHD) at 410.996.5168 or Holly Loss (DCS) at 410.996.8170 to register for a free workshop. Healthcare providers wishing to refer individuals to a workshop may also call Lily Hilferty at 410.996.5168 or Holly Loss at 410.996.8170.

For additional information contact Sheila Murphy, Department of Community Services, at 410.996.8437 or by email: smurphy@ccgov.org.

Or visit these websites:

Cecil County Department of Community Services:

<http://www.ccgov.org/government/community-services>

Cecil County Health Department: <http://www.cecilcountyhealth.org/ccdhxx/livingwell.htm>

Self-Management Resource Center: <https://www.selfmanagementresource.com/>



Living Well with Chronic Conditions is provided through a partnership between the Department of Community Services and the Cecil County Health Department.