

Self-worth

Self-worth is when a person feels she has the skills needed to take care of her life. As illness drains more of the person's energy, the ability to manage life lowers. Self-worth might be lost. Low self-worth is linked to depression in those with long-term illness.

The rate of depression occurring in people with long-term illness is high.

For example:

- **heart attack:** 40% to 65%
- **coronary artery disease (without heart attack):** 18% to 20%
- **Parkinson's disease:** 40%
- **multiple sclerosis:** 40%
- **stroke:** 10% to 27%
- **cancer:** 25%
- **diabetes:** 25%

Coping With Chronic Illness



More than 90 million people in the U.S. live with a long-term illness. This can include heart and lung disease, cancer, arthritis and diabetes. A *chronic* illness is a health problem that lasts a year or more. It can limit what a person can do. It most often needs ongoing care. The course of illness and level of disability from long-term diseases varies. Some people have mild pain and few physical limitations. Others have nonstop, bad pain and decreased quality of life.

Diagnosis and adjustments

With diseases such as heart or lung disease, the diagnosis and treatment

is fairly clear-cut. But with problems such as lupus, thyroid disease or multiple sclerosis (MS), it can be hard to find out what is wrong. It can take months or even years for the right diagnosis and treatment plan.

Feeling sick or tired and not knowing the cause can be very stressful. Many people are relieved to finally know what is wrong. "At least I know that I am not crazy" is a widely found answer to the stress that goes along with a lengthy diagnostic check.

When a person finds out what is wrong, they may have to adjust to the time and energy it takes to treat it. When it gets in the way of a person being able to live their life, they can feel hopeless and sad. These feelings are normal. Support from family and friends can be very helpful. But, in some cases, long-term illness can cause depression.

Depression

Any long-term condition can cause low spirits. But there is a higher chance depending on the how bad the illness is. Also, how much it disturbs their life. About 25 percent to 33 percent of people with a long-term illness will become depressed.

Depression can make the illness worse. This is very true if the condition causes pain or tiredness. Or if it disturbs a person's social life. Depression can also make pain and being tired worse.





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In The Spotlight...**

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Learn about your condition

You can find just about any health care information online. Ask your doctor where you can learn more about your condition. Learning about your illness lets you take an active role in your treatment. Don't be afraid to ask your doctor questions.

Trusting your medical providers

People who cope with chronic illness are faced with serious choices every day. And they may struggle with a health care system that doesn't meet their needs, or give needed info or support.

Having a long-term condition almost always calls for many visits to doctors and clinics. Believing in your health care team can give you peace of mind. The idea of patient- and family-centered care is key in modern health care practices. It's even more important in taking care of a long-term illness. It is important that you feel comfortable with your care provider.

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Emotional and spiritual support

Having family and social support improves life for people with long-term conditions. Even when a person is very sick, just knowing someone cares can make things better. Non-traditional methods have also been shown to lessen some symptoms and help the quality of life. These can include prayer, meditation and exercise approved by the doctor.



If you or a family member has a long-term condition, take heart. You are not alone. Ask for help and support from family members, friends or clergy. You may also call the toll-free phone number on this flyer to find help in your community.



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