

Lifestyle Changes for Chronic Health Conditions: Care Instructions



Overview

If you have diabetes, heart disease, or blood pressure or cholesterol problems, making healthy lifestyle changes can help. Changing your diet, getting more exercise, and getting rid of harmful habits can reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke, and other serious health problems. Even small changes can help. Start with steps that you can take right away. Think about things such as time limits, stress, and temptations that might get in the way, and figure out how you can avoid or overcome them.

Work with your doctor to plan lifestyle changes to deal with your health problem.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- If your doctor recommends it, get more exercise. For many people, walking is a good choice. Or you may want to swim, bike, or do other activities. Bit by bit, increase the time you're active every day. Try for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.

- Eat healthy foods.
 - Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein, and low-fat dairy foods.
 - Limit saturated fat and reduce salt.
- Stay at a weight that's healthy for you. Talk to your doctor if you need help with this.
- If you smoke, try to quit. Smoking can make most chronic health problems worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women. Too much alcohol can cause health problems.
- Take your medicines on time and in the right amounts. Use a pillbox to organize them, and use schedules, alarms, or other tools to help you stay on track. For medicines to work properly, you must take them as directed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Get your blood pressure checked often. Get a cholesterol test when your doctor tells you to. And keep track of your blood sugar if you have diabetes.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://kp.org/health>

Enter **K745** in the search box to learn more about "**Lifestyle Changes for Chronic Health Conditions: Care Instructions**".

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