

Managing Your Chronic Condition: The Basic 8 Framework



You play a central role in managing your chronic condition. Your doctor and the rest of your care team are your partners. They will support you and give you advice, but a lot of what you need to do is up to you.^{1,2} Whether it's getting ready for your doctor appointments, taking your medicines correctly, or making healthy lifestyle changes, the Basic 8 Framework can help you stay on top of your health.



*Click on a section of the wheel.
You'll be taken to more information
on that topic.*



The Basic 8 Framework Explained

The following self-care priorities will help you keep your condition in check.



Know When and How to Contact Your Doctor*

Having a primary care doctor or other health care professional whom you see regularly for your condition is important. You'll feel more comfortable asking questions and sharing your concerns.³

Work with your care team to be sure you know the following^{4,5}:



- ▶ What are the warning signs that signal your condition may be getting worse?
- ▶ What should you do if you have any of these signs or symptoms?



Create an action plan that covers the following^{5,6}:



- ▶ The medicines you need to take to relieve your symptoms
- ▶ When to take those medicines
- ▶ Signs or symptoms that suggest you should call your doctor
- ▶ Signs and symptoms that indicate you should seek emergency treatment

*You may see health professionals other than a doctor. For example, you might visit with a nurse practitioner, physician assistant, care manager, social worker, or other members of the care team.



Learn About Your Condition and Set Goals

It's important to know as much as you can about your condition. This can help you feel more in control, and make it easier for you to work with your doctor. Once you

are educated, you can start setting realistic goals to manage your health condition and improve your health.²

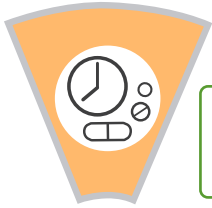
Questions you'll want answered about your condition:^{2,3}

<p>What is your condition? What causes it?</p>	<p>How is it treated (for example, taking medicine)? What would happen if no treatment was given?</p>	<p>What are the risks and benefits of different treatments?</p>	<p>What else can you do to manage your condition (for example, exercise or learn how to manage stress)?</p>
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Tips for setting personal health goals²:

- ▶ Consider what really matters to you in terms of improving your health. For instance, do you miss an activity that you can no longer do because of your condition, such as hiking? Or is your body telling you that you need to address a specific issue, such as improving your balance to prevent falls?
- ▶ Think of a goal you can accomplish in 3 to 6 months. One example might be working up to a 3-mile hike.
- ▶ Write down your goal and the date you set the goal — then share it with someone you trust.
- ▶ Come up with short-term tactics for meeting your goal that are specific and realistic. For example, to lose 10 pounds in 6 months, you might begin by substituting fresh fruits for a bowl of ice cream you eat after dinner.





Take Your Medicines Correctly

When prescribed a medicine, ask⁷:

- ▶ What's the name of the medicine?
- ▶ Why do I need the medicine?
- ▶ How many times a day should I take the medicine?
- ▶ What do I do if I miss a dose?
- ▶ Should I take the medicine with food or without food?
- ▶ Are there foods or drinks I should avoid when taking this medicine?
- ▶ What does "take as needed" mean?
- ▶ How long will it take for the medicine to work?
- ▶ Will the medicine cause problems with other medicines I take?
- ▶ Is it safe for me to drive while taking this medicine?
- ▶ How should I store the medicine?
- ▶ What are the possible side effects?
- ▶ What should I do if I have a problem with the medicine?
- ▶ When can I stop taking this medicine?
- ▶ Will I need to refill the medicine?

Many people with health conditions need to take one or more medicines.² The following tips can help you to stay on top of your medicines and safeguard your health:

Talk to your doctor about any problems with the medicine, including⁸:

- ▶ Side effects that bother you
- ▶ Difficulty paying for your medicine

To help you remember to take your medicine^{2,8}:

- ▶ Take your medication at the same time every day.
- ▶ Tie taking your medications with a daily routine like brushing your teeth.
- ▶ Set an alarm to remind yourself to take your medicine.
- ▶ Use a pill container, which allows you to organize your pills by day and time of day (for example, morning or evening).



Get the Tests and Services You Need

Part of managing your condition means preventing health problems, as well as detecting them early when they are easier to treat.^{4,9} This involves the following:

Find out what tests and screenings you need.⁴

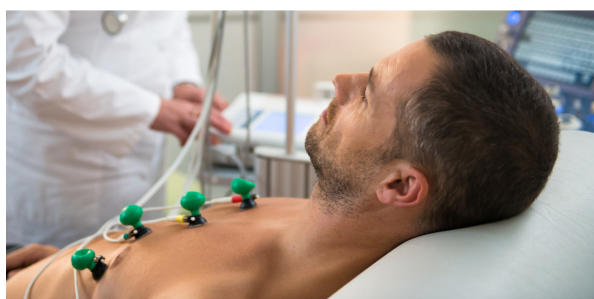
- ▶ Talk to your doctor about follow-up tests you need for your condition, as well as screenings to detect other illnesses.

Get recommended vaccines.¹⁰

- ▶ Vaccines can help prevent illnesses. People with chronic conditions are more likely to suffer complications from preventable diseases. So, it's important to stay up to date on your vaccines.

Understand your test results.¹²

- ▶ Your doctor is the best person to help you interpret the results.





Act to Keep Your Condition Under Good Control

To manage your condition, it's important to track your symptoms so you know what can make them better or worse. Keep a health diary, and when you experience a symptom, jot down the date and time, as well as the following²:

What is the symptom and when did it occur (date/time)?

Examples include headache, trouble breathing, or feeling very tired.

How bad is the symptom?

Rate how you feel on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the worst.

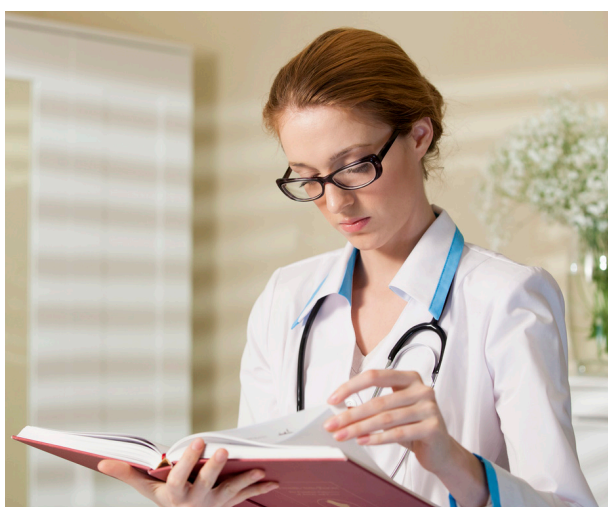
Do you think something might have triggered the symptom?

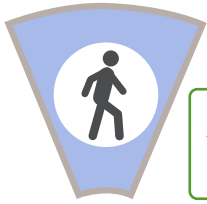
Examples include exercise, a new medicine, sunlight, or certain foods.

How did the symptoms affect any numbers that are important to track for your condition?

For example, did the symptom impact your blood pressure or blood sugar readings?

Over time, your log will help you become more aware of what affects your health. Be sure to also track your blood sugar readings, weight, lab results, or other numbers that are important to managing your chronic condition. Bring your health log to your doctor appointments.²





Make Lifestyle Changes and Reduce Your Risks

Healthy behaviors are often recommended to keep chronic conditions under control and prevent many diseases.² Talk to your doctor about which healthy behaviors are best for your condition.

Here are some healthy lifestyle habits that are good for everyone, along with tips for how you can start making these changes:

Move more¹²:

- ▶ If you are able, work up to at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, such as walking or biking, and two muscle-strengthening sessions.
- ▶ Check with your doctor before starting an exercise routine. Together you can identify exercises that are good for you.

Improve your eating habits¹³:

Consider using the USDA's MyPlate Method to help you eat healthier meals:

- ▶ One-half of your plate = fruits and vegetables
- ▶ One-fourth of your plate = lean protein, such as chicken, fish, or beans
- ▶ One-fourth of your plate = grains or other starches, such as potatoes
- ▶ A calcium-rich drink or food, such as milk, cheese, or yogurt

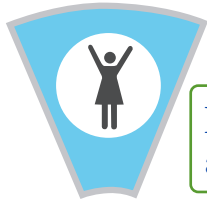
For more information on MyPlate, visit choosemyplate.gov.

Lose weight, if you need to³:

- ▶ Begin with one or two small changes that will help you eat less or be more physically active. For instance, only eat one cookie instead of two for dessert. And commit to walking for 10 minutes after you eat the cookie.

Quit smoking¹⁴:

- ▶ Make a list of triggers that make you want to smoke. Then, make a plan for what you'll do to avoid these triggers or how you'll avoid smoking if you are faced with these triggers.
- ▶ Talk to your doctor about medications that can help you quit smoking.



Build on Your Strengths and Overcome Obstacles

Living with a health condition can be challenging. On top of dealing with symptoms, you have to learn and do a lot to keep your condition under control.²

One key to coping is being resilient. This means being able to think and act in positive ways when you're in difficult situations. People with health conditions who are resilient tend to have better quality of life than those who are not. They also tend to be less anxious and sad.¹⁵ To help become more resilient, try doing some of the following:

Affirm your strengths.¹⁵

- ▶ Take time to consider your good qualities. For example, are you brave, clever, or forward-looking? Or maybe you are patient, cheerful, or creative.

Turn negative thoughts into realistic ones.²

- ▶ Ask yourself how true a negative thought is? For instance, if you think, "I'll never be able to quit smoking," ask yourself, "Is that true? Haven't I gone without smoking before?"
- ▶ Reframe the thought so it reflects the truth: "I quit smoking for a month once when I was sick. I might be able to quit for good. I just need to figure out how."
- ▶ Encourage yourself like you'd encourage a loved one: "I have what it takes to quit. I'm a strong person. I just need a little help."

Acknowledge and grieve losses, including those caused by your condition.²

- ▶ Because of your illness, you may no longer be able to eat certain foods or take part in your favorite activities.
- ▶ Take time to grieve these losses in a way that helps you, such as crying or seeking support from a friend.



Reduce and relieve your stress.²

- ▶ Look for ways to reduce your stress level. Can you say "no" to certain activities? For example, if grocery shopping stresses you out, can you have groceries delivered?
- ▶ Find stress relief activities that work for you. Examples include deep breathing, gardening, scheduling time to have fun, or playing with a pet or children.

Seek social support.²

- ▶ Consider joining a community support group for your condition. Often, emotional and practical support comes from people with similar struggles.

Talk to your doctor if you feel depressed, worried, or anxious.¹⁶



Prepare for Your Doctor Appointments

Help your doctor and care team help you by preparing for any appointments with them.

Think about what you want to get out of the visit:³

- ▶ Is there a specific reason for the doctor visit? If so, what is it?
- ▶ What else do you want to talk about at the visit?
- ▶ Make a list of all your health worries, concerns, and questions. Then, highlight a few priorities that you really want to talk about.

Think about how you've been feeling and be ready to provide a summary for your doctor.

- ▶ Have you been feeling better or worse since your last visit?
- ▶ What symptoms have you had? When did these symptoms start and how long did they last? What tends to improve or worsen your symptoms?
- ▶ Have you started a new medicine or treatment since your last visit? If so, how have you felt since taking it?
- ▶ Have you made healthy lifestyle changes, such as moving more or eating healthy?
 - ▶ How have those changes affected you?
 - ▶ Are you having any difficulties making these changes?



Bring important information to share.²

Examples include:

- ▶ Your medication list
- ▶ Your log where you recorded your symptoms, the numbers related to your chronic condition (for example, blood pressure readings), and other important health information.

Listen carefully and ask questions during your visit.²

- ▶ If you don't understand something, ask your doctor to explain it again.
- ▶ Take notes so you won't forget what the doctor recommends.
- ▶ Consider asking a family member or friend to join you at the visit so you have two pairs of ears listening.
- ▶ Before you leave, sum up what you think the doctor has recommended and ask if you got it correct.

Follow up and take needed actions.³

- ▶ Did your doctor prescribe a new medicine? Refer you to another doctor? Recommend that you get a test or screening? Be sure you know what you need to do next. And tell your doctor about anything that might get in your way of following through.





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