



Living Well with Chronic Conditions

What is it?

A group-based, participatory class led by two trained peer leaders over 6 weekly sessions. Participants learn about effective strategies for symptom management and general wellness. Through the use of action-planning, brainstorming, and problem-solving participants identify and pursue goals for health. Participants get a book and cover healthy eating, managing pain and emotions, getting good sleep and physical activity, communication, mindfulness, decision-making, medications, and breathing techniques. This program was developed at Stanford and is known in literature as the “Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.” Endorsed by CDC, AHRQ, CMS, DHHS, and the Surgeon General.

Who is it for?

Any adult (age>18) with any physical or mental chronic health condition. Especially valuable in older adults, patients with multiple chronic conditions, individuals with rising health risks, and those who are lonely or fearful. Excellent for individuals with depression and/or disabilities, although even those with average health often benefit from and enjoy the program. Participants must be able to engage in group discussion. Not appropriate for individuals that will disrupt group dynamics or for those acutely incapacitated by severe illness or physical limitations.

What does it do?

Covers the “street smarts” of living with chronic illness. Increases participant self-efficacy and improves knowledge and beliefs that contribute to behavior change and improved self-management. Initial studies only evaluated patient-reported outcomes. More recent studies have confirmed improvements in objective measures. CDC-sponsored meta-analysis shows sustained improvements in communication with physician, energy, fatigue, mood, symptom management, and amount of aerobic and strengthening exercise. A CMS-funded national study confirmed Triple Aim improvement in multiple health outcomes, utilization, and cost (net savings of \$360 per participant). The program is effective regardless of chronic illness. Should not expect measurable changes until 6 months post intervention when patients are enacting life changes.

> For class information and to register, visit yourjuniper.org

How to Discuss With Patients

Note that many patients do not feel they have a “chronic health condition” so it is helpful to destigmatize this term. Patients identify with the challenge of carrying out the work of healthcare, changing behaviors, and managing symptoms. Your patients will appreciate that you understand this struggle. They will be excited to learn that this program can help them. When discussing the program, it helps to emphasize that the leaders are peers and that many patients like them find great value and improve. Expect your patient to come back with new strategies, goals, and questions. Use this opportunity to tailor your treatment plan and encourage your patient in his/her efforts.