

# Coping with a Chronic Illness



Allergies  
Arthritis  
Asthma  
COPD  
Diabetes  
Migraine  
...and more

Having a long-term, or chronic, illness can disrupt your life in many ways. You may often be tired and in pain. Your illness might affect your appearance, physical abilities and independence. Your ability to work may be affected, and have a financial impact.

Here are five basic steps to help you cope, make decisions, and get on with your life.

**Take the time you need.** Don't rush important decisions about your health. In most cases, you

will have time to carefully examine your options and decide what is best for you.

**Get the support you need.** Look for support from family and friends, a trained counselor, people who are going through the same thing, and those who have "been there." They can help you cope with your situation and make informed decisions.

**Talk with your doctor.** Good communication with your doctor can help you feel more satisfied with the care you receive. Research shows it can even have a positive effect on things such as symptoms and pain. Getting a second opinion may help you feel more confident about your care.

**Seek information.** When learning about your health problem and its treatment, look for information that is based on a careful review of the latest scientific findings published in medical journals. See the large box for more guidelines.

**Decide on a treatment plan.** Work with your doctor to decide on a treatment plan that best meets your needs. Follow the plan and adapt it over time to suit your condition, lifestyle, and doctor's advice.

## Personal Health Record (PHR)

Keeping a personal health record can be especially helpful when dealing with a chronic condition. Aetna offers a free PHR for all pre-Medicare eligible retirees and covered dependents with Dow Aetna coverage. Visit [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com).



## Seeking Information

- Ask your personal physician for referrals and information.
- Check for information and Trusted Links on [DowFriends.com](http://DowFriends.com) or [DowFamilyHealth.com](http://DowFamilyHealth.com).
- Contact the national organization dedicated to the illness (e.g., American Lung Association). Most have toll-free phone lines as well as websites.
- US Aetna members - Enroll in Aetna Health Connections<sup>SM</sup> Disease Management Program - log on to [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com), click Benefits, then Health Programs.

Research shows that patients who are more involved in their health care tend to get better results, and are more satisfied.

# Open up and say anything



## Want to take charge of your health?

Start asking more  
questions...  
To your doctor.  
To your pharmacist.  
To your nurse.

- What is the test for?
- When will I get the results?
- Are there any side effects?
- Why do I need this surgery?
- What is the recovery time?
- What are the possible complications?
- Who can I go to for a second opinion?
- Which hospital is best for my needs?
- How do you spell the name of that drug?
- How can we adapt this plan for my lifestyle?
- Will this medicine interact with others that I'm already taking?

**Get the  
answers.**  
Because the  
most  
important  
question is  
the one you  
*should* have  
asked.