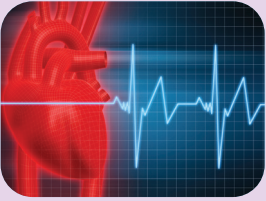




CHAPTER 5

Chronic Diseases

Learning About Chronic Diseases



Heart Disease



Cancer



Diabetes



High Blood Pressure



Asthma

Chronic Diseases

Chronic diseases are diseases that last a long time. Examples of chronic diseases are **heart disease**, **cancer**, **diabetes**, **high blood pressure**, and **asthma**. Once you have a chronic disease, you will have it for months or even years. You may have it for the rest of your life.

Not all diseases are chronic diseases. Some non-chronic diseases respond well to treatment and the person recovers from the disease. Other non-chronic diseases will simply pass on their own without the need for treatment. If you have the flu you will be sick for a while and then get better. This is NOT a chronic disease. This is called an **acute disease**.

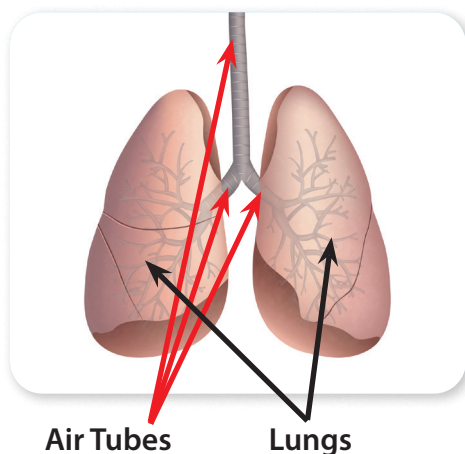
If you have a chronic disease you will have to see the doctor more often. You may have to make some changes in your lifestyle (eat healthier, exercise more, stop smoking) or take medicines to keep the disease from getting worse. In some cases the quality of your life will suffer and you can die. In most cases you can live a long and healthy life if you manage your chronic disease well.



This chapter will answer these questions.

- What are some common chronic diseases?
- How can I tell if I have a chronic disease?
- What do I need to do if I have a chronic disease?

What Are Some Common Chronic Diseases?



Asthma

Asthma is a problem with the tubes that carry air to your lungs. If the air tubes become narrower or close up it is hard to breathe. In an asthma attack, you feel like you cannot get enough air. While asthma is common in children, the majority of people with asthma are adults.

Diabetes

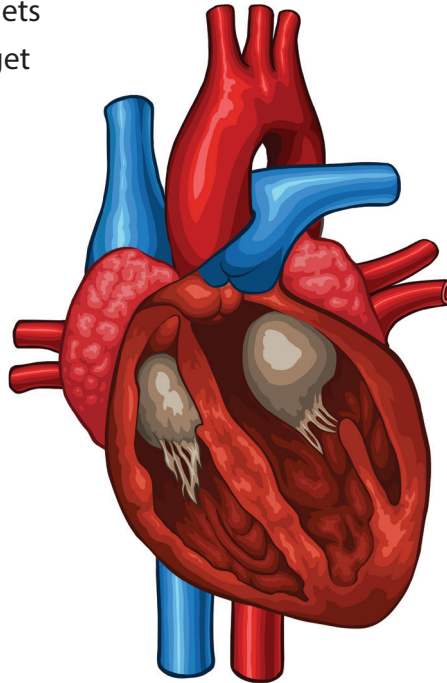
Diabetes is when your body has trouble using the sugar in your blood to produce energy. If you have diabetes, your blood sugar level can get too high or too low. This can be harmful to your body. There are different tests to measure your blood sugar level to see if you may have diabetes. Being overweight makes it easier to get diabetes



▲ In the picture, the blood sugar level is 83.

Heart Disease

The tubes that carry blood to and from your heart are called veins and **arteries**. As a result of poor eating habits, lack of exercise, smoking and family history, arteries can become partly blocked. This is called heart disease. If an artery gets too blocked and the blood cannot get to the different parts of your body, damage can result and serious symptoms may appear. If the heart does not receive enough blood as a result of a blockage, part of the heart muscle dies and the heart cannot do its pumping job anymore. This is called a heart attack. If the brain does not receive enough blood because of a blockage, then a stroke can occur. A stroke can damage your brain, or it can kill you. More people in the U.S. die from heart disease than any other sickness.



Do I Have a Chronic Disease?

Sometimes you can have a chronic disease and not know it for years. Some chronic diseases have no symptoms. That is why regular checkups and talking to your doctor are so important.

These are some tests that help doctors find chronic diseases:

- EKG (electro-cardio-gram)
- Blood pressure test
- Blood analysis
- Stress test

A doctor can do tests for some chronic diseases. For example, EKG tests can help check for heart disease. Blood pressure tests help check for high blood pressure.

In Florida, almost 1 of every 3 deaths is caused by heart disease. Some of the people that died did not talk to a doctor or get a checkup soon enough. They did not know about their disease until it was too late.



▲ This man is getting his blood pressure checked.



◀ This man is getting a test to check his heart.

What are Risk Factors?

Risk factors make it more likely that you will get a disease.

You cannot change some risk factors, like:

- Family health history
- Your sex or age

You can change risk factors based on your health habits:

- What you eat
- How much you exercise
- If you smoke

Famous Sayings About Staying Healthy

“Cancer is a word, not a sentence.”

“What can’t be cured must be endured.”

“Heart disease is the silent killer.”



Family Health History

Sometimes you are more likely to get a disease if your mother, father, or grandparent had the disease. If one of these people in your family had heart disease, then you have a family history of heart disease. If people in your family had it, you are more likely to get it too.

Know your family health history and tell your doctor about it!

What If I Have a Chronic Disease?

If you have a chronic disease your doctor will discuss with you a treatment plan. The **treatment plan** explains what you must do to manage your chronic disease. Ask questions, about the treatment plan. Ask for an interpreter. Do NOT say that you understand your treatment plan until you really do!

If I have a chronic disease, what do I need to do?

- Keep in touch with your doctor.
- Follow your treatment plan.
- Change your health habits.
- Take your medicines carefully.
- Know the danger signs of an emergency.



Eat Healthy



Get Exercise



Don't Smoke

Check Your Learning

Which of the following diseases is not a chronic disease?




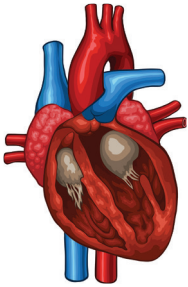

- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Flu
- ☐ Asthma



Key Points

- A chronic disease can last for a long time.
- You must manage a chronic disease to keep yourself healthy.
- Some chronic diseases have no symptoms.
- Talk to your doctor about chronic diseases.

Chronic Disease Risk Factors & Warning Signs

Chronic Disease	Risk Factors	Warning Signs	Examples of Treatments
Asthma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family history • Air pollution • Smoking • Cigarette smoke • Low birth weight • Overweight/Obesity • Exposure to chemicals • Dust, animal hairs at home • Allergies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheezing sound when you breathe • Trouble breathing • Tight feeling in your chest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an inhaler 
Diabetes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family history • 45+ years old • Smoking • Overweight/Obesity • High blood pressure • Not enough exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirsty and hungry all the time • Have to urinate a lot • Feeling tired • Upset stomach • Weight loss • Blurred vision (trouble seeing clearly) • Sores heal slowly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take insulin when needed 
Heart Disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family history • Diabetes • Smoking • Overweight/Obesity • High blood pressure • High cholesterol • Not enough exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squeezing pain in your chest or arm • Trouble breathing when active • Sometimes no warning signs at all • Extreme fatigue when active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cholesterol • Take medicines to control your blood pressure 

NOTE: These are only examples. There are many other chronic diseases to know about. A doctor can tell you about the risk factors, warning signs, and treatments for these and other chronic diseases.

How Can a Doctor Help?

- Do not wait for symptoms to appear! Get regular checkups. Have your doctor check you for chronic diseases. If you know you have a chronic disease you can take care of it and stay healthy.
- Tell your doctor about people in your family who have chronic diseases. If someone in your family has a heart attack, tell your doctor and add it to your family health history.
- Doctors need to see you more often if you have a chronic disease. Ask your doctor how often you need to get regular checkups. Ask what to do if you have new symptoms. Ask how to recognize emergency symptoms.
- Doctors need to know if something they ordered is or is not helping your symptoms. Keeping you healthy takes team work and the doctor often has many different medicines and treatment plans he or she can try until you find the one that works best for you. Be sure to tell your doctor how you are feeling when you start a new medicine or treatment.

Dialog

Doctor: I'm glad you made this appointment. We found out about your heart disease before it got too bad.

Patient: How can I keep it from getting worse?

Doctor: Don't smoke, eat healthy foods, exercise, take your medicine.

Patient: OK. And when do I need to see you again?

Doctor: Next month. Make an appointment. Then we can see how the treatment plan is working.

Patient: OK, thanks. I'll make an appointment on my way out.



How Can I Learn More?

Visit these websites to learn more about chronic diseases.

Information

American Heart Association

<http://www.americanheart.org>

Information on Heart Health in Multiple Languages

<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/info-lote>

Heart Health Easy-to-Read English/Spanish Booklets

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/resources#lathhhh>

KidsHealth (Health information for kids, parents, and teenagers)

<http://www.kidshealth.org>

National Cancer Institute (in English and Spanish)

<https://www.cancer.gov/resources-for/patients>

Cancer Information Service (in English and Spanish)

<https://www.cancer.org/about-us/what-we-do/providing-support.html>
or call 1-800-227-2345

Activities

The Asthma Wizard- Animated Book About Asthma

<https://www.nationaljewish.org/conditions/pediatric-asthma/overview/resources>

Asthma Basics

<http://goo.gl/bzr1UR>

Managing Diabetes

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/in-depth/diabetes-management/art-20047963#>

Time to Talk Cardio

www.timetotalkcardio.com

Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) - (available in multiple languages)

https://medlineplus.gov/highbloodpressure.html#cat_51

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