

Coping with a Chronic Illness



Chronic illness can bring on bouts of depression, which may lead to a general rundown physical condition that interferes with successful treatment. The following tips can help you to better cope with a chronic illness:

- ◆ Ask others how they adjusted to the physical effects of the illness
- ◆ Become familiar with side effects of treatment and be proactive in preparing for certain challenges
- ◆ Communicate clearly with your doctors, documenting symptoms or questions you may forget when feeling ill
- ◆ Try to maintain emotional balance when coping with negative feelings.
- ◆ Maintain confidence and a positive self image by keeping up with personal grooming and social activity
- ◆ Get help as soon as symptoms of depression appear - ignoring the symptoms may cause complications later
- ◆ Create a supportive, positive environment and ask for help when daily tasks become overwhelming



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SBS Foundation

Educational Series

Chronic Illness & Depression



Short
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*Empowering patients to live fuller
lives, creating a lifeline of hope.*

What is Chronic Illness?

A chronic illness is defined as one that persists long-term and is recurrent, usually without a known cure. Some chronic conditions can be improved by appropriate choices in diet, exercise, lifestyle, and medications. Examples of chronic illnesses include but are not limited to:

- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Arthritis
- ◆ HIV/AIDS
- ◆ Lupus
- ◆ Multiple Sclerosis
- ◆ Short Bowel Syndrome
- ◆ Irritable Bowel Syndrome



Is Depression Common in Chronic Illness?

Depression is a common symptom of chronic illness, but having a chronic illness can trigger clinically significant depression, a potentially serious, but treatable, illness. According to UpToDate.com it is estimated that up to one third of patients with chronic illness experience depression. The challenge for the patient and healthcare team is to determine if the symptoms are related to the underlying illness, and if the symptoms are so powerful or restricting as to require specific treatment. Patients diagnosed with chronic illness must adjust to the demands of the illness, as well as, the treatment. The illness may affect mobility, independence, self-perception, and social interaction. These changes can be stressful and the natural response to loss involves sadness, anger and grief.

For further information and support visit our website—www.shortbowelfoundation.com

Symptoms of Depression?

Symptoms such as fatigue, poor appetite, impaired concentration, and insomnia are common features of



many chronic medical conditions, as well as, clinical depression. When depression is present, it is extremely important to treat both the depression and the chronic medical illness at the same time. Other symptoms of depression may include:

- ◆ Significant weight loss or weight gain
- ◆ A persistent “blue” mood or loss of interest in daily activities
- ◆ Sleep disturbances—sleeping too much or not able to sleep
- ◆ Fatigue/loss of energy
- ◆ Apathy (lack of feeling or emotion)
- ◆ Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- ◆ Thoughts of death or suicide

Contact your doctor if these symptoms persist. Suffering in silence is seldom the best option.