

Living Well for Better Health

WHAT IS IT?

A group-based, participatory class led by two trained peer leaders over six weekly sessions. Participants learn effective strategies for symptom management and general wellness. Using action planning, brainstorming, and problem-solving, participants identify and pursue health goals. The program covers healthy eating, managing pain and emotions, getting good sleep and physical activity, communication, mindfulness, decision-making, medications, and breathing techniques. Developed at Stanford, this program is known in the literature as the “Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.” It is endorsed by the CDC, AHRQ, CMS, DHHS, and the Surgeon General.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Any adult with any physical or mental chronic health condition. It is especially valuable for older adults, patients with multiple chronic conditions, individuals with rising health risks, and those who are lonely or fearful. The program is excellent for individuals with depression and/or disabilities, though even those in average health often benefit from and enjoy it. Participants must be able to engage in group discussions. It is not appropriate for individuals who will disrupt group dynamics or those acutely incapacitated by severe illness or physical limitations.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

The program covers the “street smarts” of living with chronic illness, increasing participant self-efficacy and improving knowledge and beliefs that contribute to behavior change and improved self-management. Initial studies evaluated patient-reported outcomes, while more recent studies confirmed improvements in objective measures. A CDC-sponsored meta-analysis shows sustained improvements in communication with physicians, energy, fatigue, mood, symptom management, and the amount of aerobic and strengthening exercise. A CMS-funded national study confirmed Triple Aim improvements in multiple health outcomes, utilization, and cost, with net savings of \$360 per participant. The program is effective regardless of chronic illness, but measurable changes should not be expected until six months post-intervention when patients are enacting life changes.

HOW TO DISCUSS WITH PATIENTS

Many patients do not feel they have a “chronic health condition,” so it is helpful to destigmatize this term. Patients often identify with the challenge of carrying out healthcare tasks, changing behaviors, and managing symptoms. When discussing the program with patients, approach the conversation with optimism, empathy, and excitement. Understand that managing diabetes involves significant challenges, such as balancing healthcare, changing behaviors, and managing symptoms. Acknowledge these struggles and express that you understand their difficulties. Share your excitement about the program’s potential to help them. Highlight that the program leaders are peers who have faced similar challenges and found great value in the group classes. Many patients like them have experienced significant improvement. Let your patient know you expect them to return with new strategies, goals, and questions, and that you’ll use this opportunity to tailor their treatment plan and support their efforts. Emphasize that the program is both safe and enjoyable. Encourage patients to bring a friend, family member, or caregiver to attend with them. This can help involve others in addressing their needs, concerns, and motivations. Promote the program as a way to connect with others who share similar concerns. Emphasize the opportunity for peer support, sharing experiences, and building a support network. Explain how the skills and knowledge gained can directly benefit their daily routine and overall well-being.



What participants say:

“The booklet has some very good information and exercises and resources. It was also helpful to connect with others and discuss various options for dealing with a variety of problems.”

- **86% are satisfied with the quality of the program**
- **88% would recommend this program to a friend or family member**



To make a referral or register for an upcoming workshop, visit healthylivingforme.org