Chronic Illness



Introduction

Seeking support for managing a chronic illness or health condition helps maintain your long-term health. You are the expert in how your condition affects you and what treatments or management work best for you.

What is a chronic or ongoing health condition?

A chronic condition is a health condition that affects someone for a long time. Common chronic conditions include asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic fatigue, chronic anxiety, and epilepsy, as well as many others.

If you’re living with a chronic condition, you likely have a regular General Practitioner (family doctor) who might be the primary doctor involved in your care.

You may also see specialists, pediatricians, and other health professionals that can help you manage your condition.

They will work with you over time, regularly checking in with how you are

managing your illness, any changes to your symptoms, and the impact on other aspects of your life.

Having a good relationship with your doctor is important

> *Having a health team that you trust and who you can communicate clearly with you helps you to feel confident in being supported to manage your illness.*

Your doctor and health team are a great source of information to help you understand your condition and treatment better.

When seeing health professionals, it is important that you feel heard and health professionals communicate information in a way that is easy for you to understand.

This partnership allows you to build trust and have your concerns and needs addressed. You are the expert in how your illness impacts you and your life.

If you have a chronic health condition, your condition might change over time through different stages of your life – particularly through your teenage years.

Keep track of any changes and speak to your doctor about how the treatment can be managed or adjusted due to these changes.

> *Learning about your treatment is a good step towards feeling confident and achieving independence.*

For information about your rights at the doctor see Visiting a Doctor and Your Rights At the Doctor.

For more information about managing chronic illness visit Health Direct.

Transition planning

Transition is the time when you leave children's health services (pediatricians or children's hospitals) and start seeing adult health care services (specialists that focus on care for those above 18 years old).

It is a gradual process starting from diagnosis and during your teenage years you are encouraged to start taking on more of your own health responsibilities and self-

management.

This can include seeing your doctor alone for part of the consultation, providing you with the knowledge to be more independent in managing your chronic condition, arranging referrals to see adult health providers, and making sure that you see them for regular appointments.

> *Health transition often happens at the same time as many other changes in areas of your life, such as leaving high school and becoming an adult so coordination of care is very important.*

Transitioning to the adult health care system helps you to be in charge of your health and feel confident about manage your condition.

You will have the opportunity to be at the centre of all the conversations with doctors and health care workers and you will be able to make the decisions in discussion with your team about your health and treatment.

By beginning the transition process early, you will develop the knowledge and skills necessary to manage your own health care and be ready for your new adult team.

If you have any questions or concerns about transition planning, talk to your doctor about these concerns so that they can be addressed.

Chronic Illness services and resources

General information and resources

- For information about your visiting a doctor.
- For information about your rights at the doctor.
- For more information about managing chronic illness visit Health Direct.

Transition planning information and resources

- Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN) Trapeze
- Raising Children
- Agency for Clinical Innovation
- SCHN Adolescent Medicine
- Chronic Illness Peer Support (ChIPS)