



Coping with chronic illness and anxiety

It's normal to feel worried when you have been told you have a serious medical illness. It's hard to deal with a chronic illness. These include things like heart disease, diabetes or asthma. Or chronic pain and cancer.

Anxiety (painful fear) is common in people with serious illnesses. You can have anxiety at the same time as a medical illness for a number of reasons.

- There may be a physical link between the medical illness and anxiety.
- Medicines taken for illnesses may have side effects that make anxiety worse.
- Dealing with a medical illness can be hard and cause anxiety.

These problems can make you worry about your future. You may be nervous about taking care of your illness. You may worry about how it may harm how you relate to others. Learning more about your illness can help. But it is normal to worry.

Benefits of treatment

You should get help if you have felt anxious about your illness for a long time. Anxiety can be treated. Treatment can make it easier for you to manage your illness.

Getting started with treatment

A doctor can help you cope with your feelings. He or she can help figure out the cause. It's also a good idea to work with a mental healthcare provider. The provider will want to discuss a number of things with you. They include:

- How long you have been worried.
- Any bad feelings you have. Or if you have mood changes. You may feel like you're losing control.
- Your physical symptoms. These could be aches and pains. Or problems with eating. You may have trouble breathing.
- Other changes in your life. When you have a serious illness, other changes can affect you too. These changes could be good or bad. They could include a job change, marriage or a new baby. Or a divorce or death in family.
- All medicines and drugs that you use. This includes prescription medicines and over-the-counter drugs. Vitamins, caffeine and alcohol count too.
- Your health history.

Treatments

Ways to treat anxiety and serious illnesses include:

- Changing medications.
- Joining a support group.
- Going to therapy.
- Adopting a healthier lifestyle.

You can learn to manage your feelings. You can get help from healthcare professionals. It also helps to talk to other people with illnesses like yours. There are support groups for all types of illnesses.

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Healthcare does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.