

Physical Activity Offers Great Benefits to Those Living with a Health Condition

Did you know that according to the American Heart Association (AHA), active people who have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes or other chronic health conditions are more likely to live healthier for a longer period of time than inactive people with the same conditions?

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) says that physical activity can help lower your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. It also reduces your risk for stroke, relieves stress and anxiety and strengthens your heart, muscles and bones.

These benefits are important for anyone, but especially for those who with chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes and depression.

Because of the symptoms they experience, those who live with illness may find it challenging to get regular physical activity. The ADA and AHA offer the following tips:

- Look for chances to be more active during the day. Walk the mall before shopping, take the stairs instead of the escalator or take 10–15 minute breaks for walking or some other activity while watching TV or sitting.
- Don't get discouraged if you stop for a while. Get started again gradually and work up to your old pace.
- Don't participate in physical activities right after meals or when it's very hot or humid.
- It is recommended that diabetics check blood glucose before and after activity (if it's too low, eat a piece of fruit, a few crackers or glass of milk) and carry a snack to eat if you'll be active for a few hours or more. If you have one, wear your medical alert I.D.
- You can do this even if you've been sedentary for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of coronary heart disease or some other chronic health condition, see your doctor for a medical evaluation before beginning a physical activity program.

In addition to getting regular physical activity, developing and maintaining a relationship with a Primary Care Physician (PCP) who can coordinate your care is vital to your good health.

A PCP typically specializes in Family Medicine, Internal Medicine or General Practice. If you don't have a PCP, finding one is easy! Just visit your insurance carrier's website, look for the "find a doctor" area and follow the instructions.

When you're being treated for a health condition, it may not always be easy to decide where to go for care. For anything that is considered a life-threatening situation (like chest pain or sudden and severe pain) it's best to go to the emergency room. For less severe matters that still require immediate attention, if you can't get in to see your PCP, going to an urgent care facility can save you time and money.

Even if you require emergency or urgent care for your health situation, it's always best to have a relationship with a PCP who knows your history and understands what is happening with your health over time.