

Long-term conditions and mental wellbeing

If you are living with a long-term condition, it may have a negative effect on your mental wellbeing. However, help is available to help you find the right treatment for both body and mind.



What is a long-term condition?

A long-term condition, also known as a chronic condition, is one that affects your physical health and which can't be cured but can be managed. Diabetes is a common

chronic illness. Similarly, conditions caused by problems with the veins or the lymphatic system, such as venous leg ulceration or lymphoedema of the arm, must also be managed in the long-term using compression therapy,



exercise, skin care and through maintaining a lifestyle that is as healthy as possible.

Unfortunately, people living with a long-term physical condition are twice as likely to suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

your condition on you and your loved ones. You may be tired, frustrated worried and anxious, and your mental

wellbeing may suffer as a result.

The impact of a long-term condition

Living with a long-term condition can have a significant impact on all aspects of your life. For example, it is well recognised that people with venous leg ulcers can suffer from symptoms such as leakage of fluid, odour, pain and swelling of the limbs which cause embarrassment and lead to social isolation and anxiety. People who develop arm lymphoedema following breast cancer surgery may experience restricted function, pain and discomfort and an inability to wear their usual clothes.

As a consequence, life with a long-term condition can lead to problems with relationships, ability to work and carrying out usual roles and responsibilities. You may lose sleep through worry about your health and life in general, and the impact of

Unfortunately, people living with long-term conditions are twice as likely to develop a mental health problems such as anxiety or depression. Living with a mental health issue can also affect your ability to take care of yourself and cope with your physical condition, creating a vicious circle that can be hard to break.

Taking care of your mental health

It is important to realise that help is available and you do not have to compromise your mental wellbeing or accept that it is part and parcel of life with a long-term physical health condition.

Help is available if you know where to turn to access the help and support you need.▶



**Its good
to talk...**

Talk to your healthcare professional to optimise management of your long-term condition

Make sure management of your long-term condition is optimal so that any symptoms that are reducing your quality of life can be alleviated. If you feel that your healthcare professional is not supporting you as well as they could, you can ask for a referral, or switch to a different care provider. You can also discuss your mental wellbeing with them so they can offer advice on how to get help or refer you to a different service. This may include speaking to a therapist.

Talk to your family and friends

It can help to speak to your family and friends about how you are

feeling, to help them realise how your condition is affecting you, as this may not always be obvious. For example, a lack of sleep due to pain and discomfort may mean you are tired and irritable throughout the day. Explaining this can help them to support you by either providing solutions or just lending a supportive ear.

Talk to organisations or people with the same condition

Making a connection with people who understand what you are going through can make you feel less alone, and provide a source of support. Organisations and charities can provide information about your condition and how it can be managed, helping you feel more in control. For more information on sources of help, visit our charity news on p.32–3.