

Programs help those with chronic diseases cope

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This month my dad joined the millions of Americans who have diabetes.

In his case it's type 2, or the insulin-resistant variety. In a sense it doesn't matter. Regardless of the type, diabetes can lead to terrible complications if the disease isn't managed.

For millions of Americans, managing a chronic disease can seem like a full-time job. They must manage the timing of medications, whether the meds are to be taken with or without food.

Then they must manage the food. Is the meal or snack full of simple or complex carbohydrates? Will it raise their blood glucose too rapidly? How much sodium is in it? Is that too much? What about the fat? Is it a good fat or bad fat?

And that's before they've even figured out if they can afford the food after forking out money for medications, glucose testing strips and medical co-payments (if they're fortunate enough to have insurance).

These daily decisions can make one weary. How do you truly live well with chronic disease?

One way is with the help of self-management programs and support groups. In Oregon, the Department of Human Services offers a six week self-management program titled "Living Well with Chronic Conditions" through their community partnerships.

According to the DHS Web site, the program "teaches real-life skills for living a full, healthy life with a chronic condition." That's optimistic news for Oregonians like my dad who have a newly diagnosed chronic conditions like diabetes, heart failure or arthritis or are looking for help in managing a disease they've had for decades.

The program covers topics like managing symptoms and medications, working with your health-care team, goal setting and problem solving, and eating well.

Living Well came to Oregon via Stanford University's School of Medicine. Their self-management programs are evaluated for their effectiveness through randomized clinical control trials that last two to four years. In other words, Living Well demonstrated proven results before being offered by DHS in Oregon.

If you're living with a chronic condition like diabetes or heart failure and feel overwhelmed or want assistance, visit the DHS Living Well Web site, call a local hospital, or contact your care provider to find a program near you.

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Learn more

Salem Hospital and Silverton Hospital both offer the Living Well program, as does the Mid-Willamette Valley IPA as does Salud Medical Center in Woodburn.

Links

www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/livingwell/lvworkshops.shtml

<http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/programs/>

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