

SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

Counseling & Therapy

Talking to someone about your struggles can be super helpful, and a mental health professional may be able to provide you with tips and insights to help cope with your physical and mental health struggles.

Check out Carna's "Accessible Therapy Options" pamphlet or information packet for more resources!

Support Groups

Since so many people deal with chronic diseases, they have created many support spaces!

PsychologyToday and the Global Autoimmune Insitute have lists of support groups you can search for based on location. Searching "chronic illness support groups" will come up with many options!

Friends and Family

Your family and friends are here to support you! Don't feel guilty about asking for help when you need it, that is part of the roles and responsibilities of relationships.

Friends/family can be helpful support for doctors visits, finding other supports/resources, and particularly emotionally/physically painful moments.

Accommodations in College

Most universities have (and are required to have) certain services for students with disabilities.

Accommodations can usually be requested for testing, transportation, parking, housing, and dietary considerations.

Reach out to your university's Student Disability Services office to see what they could offer for your situation!



Carna is a nonprofit organization that strives to provide accessible information about mental health to everyone.



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The Mental Health Impacts of a Chronic Illness

How chronic illnesses intersect with depression, and resources to deal with it.



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What are chronic diseases?

A chronic disease is a condition that **lasts at least one year** and requires ongoing **medical attention or limits** activities of daily living or both.

Examples: autoimmune diseases, diabetes, cancer, epilepsy, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, hypothyroidism, multiple sclerosis, and pain.

“Illness” vs “Disease”

Patients suffer “illnesses”; doctors diagnose and treat “diseases”.

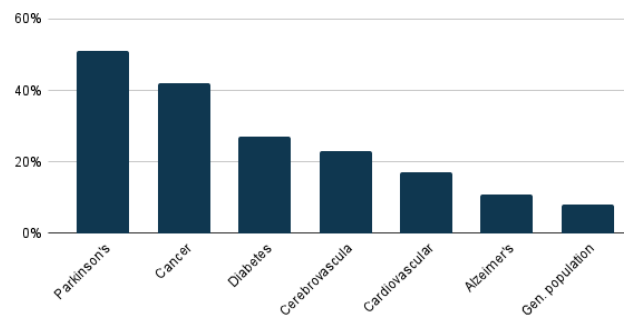
Illnesses are essentially when people feel a difference or issue in their state of being and role performance. *Diseases* (in modern medicine) are abnormalities in the function and/or structure of body organs and systems.

In 2018, 51.8% of US adults had at least 1 chronic condition, and 27.2% had multiple chronic conditions.

Link between chronic diseases and depression

- Research suggests that people who have a chronic disease and depression tend to have **more severe symptoms** of both illnesses.
- Adults with disabilities report experiencing frequent mental distress almost **5 times as often** as adults without disabilities.
- In 2018, **32.9% of adults with disabilities** experienced frequent mental distress.
- **Only 25%–50%** of people with diabetes (a chronic disease) with depression **get diagnosed and treated**.

Percentage of patients who have depression, by disease type
From the CDC and MHA



Conclusion:

- There is a strong correlation between chronic illnesses and depression
- Mental health screenings are not an automatic part of treatment, so doctors miss a lot of symptoms

The Vice-Versa Effect

Why chronic diseases may trigger depression:

- Anxiety, stress, or other challenges caused by a chronic disease
- Brain changes from a chronic disease (e.g. Parkinson's or stroke)
- Medication used for treatment

Why depression may be linked to certain chronic diseases:

(e.g. heart disease, diabetes, stroke, pain, osteoporosis, and Alzheimer's):

- Challenges completing tasks that are good for health
 - ex. eating well and exercising, due to symptoms like fatigue
- Challenges accessing medical care
 - could help prevent, detect, or treat health issues early and avoid progression
- Changes in the way the body functions due to depression
 - such as abnormal inflammation, blood circulation, heart rate control, and stress hormones