



*I had Hypertension. The big word is **had**. After taking the workshop I have since lost 25 pounds. I began exercising and eating healthier. After losing the weight along with proper nutrition and exercise I have been able to get off my blood pressure medicine and my blood pressure now runs about 130/70. I feel great and have a lot more energy.* --Participant from Marion, Virginia

Older adults and people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by chronic illness. According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 80% of older adults live with at least one chronic health condition. In a 30-day period, people with disabilities experience an average of nine days of restricted activity due to health challenges, more than four times the rate of their counterparts without a disability

Through the *Live Well, Virginia!* programs, individuals coping with chronic diseases can take steps to improve their overall health, feel better, and live life to the fullest.

The core program is the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP). Developed by Stanford University, CDSMP is a six week, 2.5 hour workshop that offers tools and information to help people manage their chronic illnesses and participate more fully in life. There is strong evidence across many studies that CDSMP participants experience several beneficial health outcomes, including greater energy, increased participation in physical activity, improved health status, reduced pain symptoms, and improved psychological well-being. Participants also report enhanced communication and partnerships with physicians and greater confidence that they can take actions to affect their own health.

Long-term, CDSMP has been shown to reduce healthcare costs by decreasing the number of emergency room visits, the number of hospital admissions, and hospital length of stay.

Through this supportive interactive workshop, often led by others with chronic conditions, participants learn about a variety of topics, such as

- Healthy eating and exercise choices
- Evaluating new treatment choices
- Appropriate use of medications
- Effective ways to talk with healthcare professionals and loved ones

Most importantly, participants help each other through brainstorming and problem-solving as they develop weekly achievable action plans. Classes are highly interactive, where mutual support and success build the participants' confidence in their ability to manage their health and maintain active and fulfilling lives.

Other related workshops are also available in some areas. The Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP) includes techniques to deal with diabetes symptoms such as fatigue, pain and emotional issues; healthy eating and exercise choices; preventing low blood sugar; and skin and foot care. Tomando Control de su Salud, in Spanish, covers the same general topics as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and is presented in ways that are culturally appropriate. Programa Manejo Personal de la Diabetes is also in Spanish and covers the same topics as DSMP. Cancer, Thriving and Surviving and Chronic Pain Self-Management workshops are available in some areas of the state.

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