Get the Most Out of Life

Stanford Chronic Disease Self Management Program

Important information for health and community workers: Get the Most Out of Life is designed to complement medical treatment and programs, by helping Tasmanians to manage their chronic conditions and symptoms. We encourage you to provide this information to anyone you feel will benefit from the program.

Program dates and locations are available at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/pophealth/chronic_condition

What is Get the Most Out of Life?
Get the Most Out of Life is a fun and practical way to learn how to overcome daily challenges and maintain an active and fulfilling life while living with chronic health conditions.

The group-based program is run throughout Australia, and is based on extensive overseas research. Evidence shows program participants have improved wellbeing and quality of life, and are able to better manage their symptoms.

Who can benefit from the program?
The program is suitable for people with ongoing health conditions, such as:
- arthritis
- chronic kidney disease
- diabetes
- multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions
- respiratory disorders
- cardiovascular disease.

How can the program help?
Get the Most Out of Life provides basic information about chronic illness and encourages participants to share their experiences.

It helps participants learn how to:
- manage their symptoms
- get started with healthy eating and physical activity
- communicate effectively with their doctor and healthcare team
- manage difficult emotions
- set goals as a key self-management tool
- self-manage their responsibilities in relation to medication
- practise relaxation techniques and other self-help activities designed to decrease stress, pain and depression.

The program is especially helpful for people who have more than one chronic condition, as it gives them the skills to coordinate all the things needed to manage their health, as well as to help them keep active.

It is also suitable for people who support or care for people with ongoing health conditions.
What are the benefits of referring to the program?
Get the Most Out of Life is designed to run alongside regular treatment, as well as education programs such as cardiac rehabilitation or diabetes management, through:

- educating participants on how to better manage their chronic conditions
- encouraging participants to make appropriate use of healthcare providers
- providing a supportive group setting to help motivate participants towards self management of their chronic condition/s
- monitoring and managing the symptoms and signs of illness
- managing the impact of illness on functioning, emotions and interpersonal relationships
- adhering to treatment regimes.

More information
The Get the Most Out of Life program involves a 2.5 hour session once a week over a six-week period.

It is run in small groups of 10 to 15 people. The sessions are facilitated by two trained leaders, who are often living with chronic conditions themselves.

Participants are asked for a gold coin donation to cover the cost of refreshments.

Programs are run by the Department of Health and Human Services, along with the MS Society of Tasmania and Kidney Health Australia.

For more information about the program, or for a calendar of upcoming programs, go to: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/pophealth/chronic_condition

Alternatively, phone the Program Support Team on 1800 359 589.

Suzanne was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010. After going through surgery and radiation, she was feeling isolated and unable to cope with ongoing side effects and fears about her future health. Here, she talks about how Get the Most Out of Life helped her regain her enjoyment of life.

“I was diagnosed with breast cancer last year and on top of the side effects from radiation and drug treatments, I was anxious about not knowing if the cancer would return sooner or later. Coming to grips with a lifelong possibility of the return of the disease can be soul destroying and lead to an inability to feel able to plan ahead and live life with ease.

“The Get the Most Out of Life Program resonated with me and my issues around being able to still enjoy my life even with the terrible burden of cancer looming over me. I was determined not to waste my life in misery worrying about something that may or may not occur in the future, and I now understand I am the one who can change my life for the better.

“The program reinforced and strengthened my aspirations to get the most out of my life and gave practical ideas on how to take up the challenge of enjoying my life no matter what happens to me. I am now more able to make decisions about my need for support and assistance. I am also more willing to look for ways to moderate stresses and difficulties in my life.

“It was inspirational to see how my fellow participants grew stronger and more capable with each session. I would recommend this program to others who feel isolated and unable to cope with stresses and issues of long term health issues.”