

## **How to Help Patients Take Charge of their Chronic Illness: Self-Management, Its Benefits, and How Digital Health Solutions Can Help Make It a Reality**

For patients living with a chronic illness—particularly cardiometabolic issues—regular management of their condition is critical for success. Many patients find it hard to learn self-management techniques shared with them by their doctor’s office, leaving them with the heavy burden of figuring out how and when to take their medications, measure key vital signs and learn how to cope with their illness on their own.

**The key to successfully filling these gaps in care, lowering costs and improving outcomes? Self-management.**

But what exactly is self-management, and why is it so important?

### **The Ability to Self-Manage Keeps Patients Healthy, Engaged and Happy with their Doctor**

***Self-management* is the ability of the patient to confidently deal with the tasks required to manage a chronic illness including symptoms, medications, treatment, physical and social issues and lifestyle changes.<sup>1</sup>**

A chronic illness diagnosis can be life-altering. From scheduling doctor’s appointments and managing complicated medication regimens to making challenging lifestyle changes, many patients find it overwhelming to cope with their illness.

Informed participants in any treatment program enjoy better health outcomes. Empowering your patients to become self-sufficient and be their own advocate, by giving them the tools to support them in their journey, sets them up to become the healthiest version of themselves. It can also mean lower health-related costs for patients and providers alike, because patients will struggle less with symptom flareups, unplanned trips to the doctor, or worse, the emergency department or a hospital.

Patients with chronic illnesses like diabetes make many health-related decisions every day that can significantly impact their health. Using self-management skills allows them to make these decisions confidently and gives them the independence they need to successfully navigate their chronic illness, year-round. Coach-supported digital health solutions make it easy for patients to make these decisions and take control over their illness.

*“Even the best [in-person] services are unable to meet all the needs of people with diabetes, especially to support the lifestyle adjustment and behavioral changes that are needed for successful self-management.”*

– Dr. Rita Kalyani, Blossom Medical Director

## Digital Health Programs and Their Role in Self-Management

Doctors play a vital role in helping patients become self-sufficient in the management of their illness by introducing them to specially designed digital health programs that focus on the self-management of their specific condition.

These tools can educate and help patients with the daily demands of self-management, such as:

- Learning and maintaining healthy lifestyle behaviors
- Monitoring symptoms
- Taking their medications correctly and as prescribed

Digital solutions also allow patients to involve their friends and family in their care, and for caregivers to remain connected and supportive of their loved one's health, which is critical for long-term success. And because these solutions are available 24/7 on commonly adopted electronic devices, they are extremely convenient to use.

Digital solutions that offer support by trained coaches can help patients learn and retain self-management skills better. They are available to coach patients on how best to monitor their health and to provide tips on sustaining healthy behaviors between medical visits.

## Successful Self-Management is Key to Managing Chronic Illnesses

Well-designed digital health tools enable self-sufficiency and confidence in patients with chronic illnesses to make the lifestyle changes they need to maintain and improve their health. Rather than relying solely on appointments with their doctor a few times a year, patients can feel supported every day as they figure out how to manage their diet, activity, blood sugar, medications and more. **This ongoing support and encouragement can be the difference between the worsening or improving health of patients with chronic conditions.**

Ultimately, digital health tools complement and support the physician's care by keeping patients engaged and accountable between office visits, ensuring the patient is able to live a healthy, fulfilled life, undefeated by their illness.

We want to hear from you! Are you implementing digital health tools for patients with cardiometabolic conditions, or would you like to learn more about trends and opportunities in this space? **Join the conversation by contacting us at [contact@johnshopkinssolutions.com](mailto:contact@johnshopkinssolutions.com) or visit our website at [www.johnshopkinssolutions.com](http://www.johnshopkinssolutions.com).**

Sources:

1. <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2005/1015/p1503.html#afp20051015p1503-b11> Barlow J, Wright C, Sheasby J, Turner A, Hainsworth J. Self-management approaches for people with chronic conditions: a review. *Patient Educ Couns.* 2002;48:177-87.