

## Understanding Chronic Illness

### Chronic Disease and Quality of Life

#### What is Chronic Illness?

Unlike having a cold or even pneumonia, where you eventually get well, chronic illness is ongoing and recurring. There are many types of chronic disease including diabetes, Alzheimer's, arthritis and heart disease. Your illness may come and go without warning or can remain and worsen over time.

#### What are Some Effects of a Chronic Illness?

The effects can vary depending on the illness. Many people complain of pain and fatigue. Physical changes and a loss of function can affect everyday activities. This may impact the patient and family both emotionally and financially.

Effects may include:

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Weight Change
- Sleeplessness
- Anxiety & Depression
- Mental Illness
- Tension & Headaches
- Environmental & Family Stresses

#### What Can You Do if You Have a Chronic Illness?

An important part of dealing with a chronic illness is understanding your disease and knowing your treatment options. Taking an active role in your own care may help improve your quality of life.

#### We Can Help

The VNA of Somerset Hills LIVING LIFE YOUR WAY program offers people with a serious illness choices on how to manage their health. It focuses on well-being and quality of life in line with your doctor's plan of care. Through a variety of services, you gain a better understanding of your chronic disease and create personal goals for success.

Services include:

- In-Home Care
- Disease Education and Self-Management
- Home Support Services
- Volunteer Support
- Palliative Care/Pain Management
- Caregiver Support
- Respite Care
- Adult Day Center
- Geriatric Care Management



### Benefits of Managing Your Chronic Illness

Working together with trusted care providers, chronically ill patients and their families who learn to manage chronic illness are able to:

- Relieve Symptoms and Improve Health Status
- Reduce Risk of Hospital Admission and Emergency Room Visits
- Build Self-Care Skills
- Gain Independence and Control
- Reduce Pain and Anxiety
- Improve Patient/Family Experience