



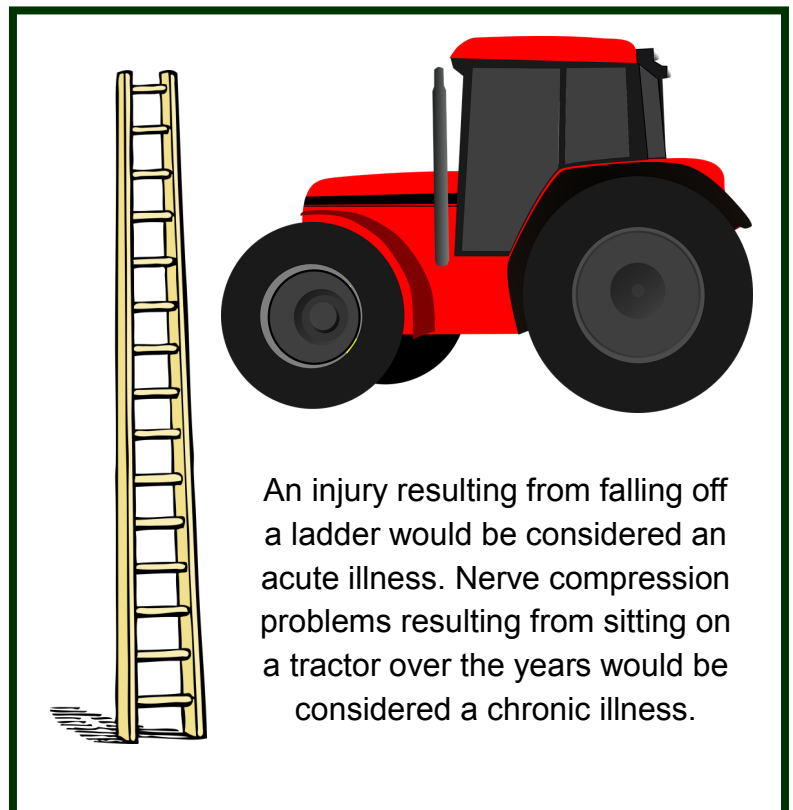
Managing Acute and Chronic Disease

An acute condition usually begins suddenly, is often misdiagnosed, lasts a short time, and gets better with medication, surgery, rest and time. This depends on the body's ability to heal itself and the health professional's knowledge and experience in the correct treatment.

Acute conditions are severe. An example of an acute condition is appendicitis; it begins rapidly, signaled by nausea and pain in the abdomen. The diagnosis, once established by examinations, leads to surgery for removal of the inflamed appendix. Carefully treating the symptoms allows these to get better.

A chronic condition usually begins and proceeds slowly. A common example is diabetes which moves slowly and silently if left untreated. Chronic illnesses usually have multiple causes that vary over time. Some causes may include: heredity, lifestyle, and exposure to environmental factors such as secondhand smoke and physiological factors, such as low levels of thyroid hormone.

Chronic illnesses usually lead to more symptoms and loss of physical or mental functioning. The symptoms associated with a chronic illness can contribute to other symptoms which can feed on each other. This can lead to a cycle that progresses and gets worse if it does not get treated.



An injury resulting from falling off a ladder would be considered an acute illness. Nerve compression problems resulting from sitting on a tractor over the years would be considered a chronic illness.

There is a wide variety of chronic diseases such as heart disease, arthritis, asthma, and kidney disease. For cells to function properly they must be nourished, receive oxygen, and get rid of waste. If anything goes wrong with any of these functions, cells become diseased. The different types of chronic diseases depend on which cells and organs are affected and the processes by which the disruption occurs. Most chronic diseases cause fatigue and shortness of breath, as well as pain, physical function and difficult emotions.

Chronic conditions can also lead to acute conditions and vice versa. For example, a heart attack, an acute condition, can be caused by blockage of the arteries that developed over decades, a chronic disease. With blockage of the arteries, oxygen is cut off, the heart muscle is injured and pain results. On the contrary, a painful fall on the knee can lead to arthritis years later.

	Acute Disease	Chronic Disease (long-term)
Beginning	Usually rapid	Slow
Causes	Usually one identifiable	Often uncertain, especially early on
Duration	Short	Usually for life
Diagnosis	Commonly accurate	Sometimes difficult
Test	Give good answers	Often limited value
Role of Professional	Select and conduct treatment	Teacher and partner
Role of Patient	To follow orders	Partners of health professionals, responsible for daily management

Acute and Chronic Health Conditions in Farming

Rough terrains, vehicle vibration and sitting for an extended time can cause progressive damage to muscles and joints, especially in the back. For example, sitting on a tractor for prolonged hours over the years can cause injury to the lower back. A common example is sciatica, which is a chronic illness due to nerve compression.

On the other hand, unsafe working conditions and practices can cause falls, trips, or slips that can lead to acute injuries. For example, falling off a ladder, slipping on a wet floor, or falling on uneven terrains causes instant injuries. These unprogressive, instant injuries deem it as an acute injury compared to the chronic injuries that are progressive.

How Do I Become an Active Self-Manager?

Most chronic diseases can be controlled by changing lifestyle habits, such as eating healthy, increasing physical activity and taking medications as directed by your doctor. It is very important as a self-manager that you understand the disease. This means observing how the disease and its treatments affect you. It is helpful to know and understand the natural rhythms of the chronic illness. Always talk to your doctor about new symptoms you may be experiencing. Keep in mind that every chronic condition has special needs and the management skills vary. For example, someone with diabetes needs to monitor their blood glucose on a daily basis. Someone with high blood pressure must monitor their blood pressure daily. If someone only has high blood pressure and no diabetes, their primary concern would be to monitor their blood pressure more frequently than their blood glucose.

To be a good self manager you should:

Take the steps necessary to deal with illness.

This includes taking medication as directed, making doctor visits as necessary; and may include more physical activity or a special diet.

Continue living your life normally.

Remember, you are taking control of the disease, it is not taking control of you. You still need to live your daily life and continue relationships with friends and family. Adjustments to your life will become part of your new healthier normal.

Establish support to deal with emotional hardships.

You might have various emotions in regards to your chronic illness; some may be negative including fear, anger, and depression. Help family members understand ways to help you and seek local support groups and resources.



Stay in control, get informed.
Do it for your health and your family.

Knowledge + Action = Health

University of California, Davis

Biological and
Ag Engineering

One Shields Ave
Davis, CA 95616

Toll Free Phone
1-800-477-6129

Phone (530) 752-1613

Email: calagra@ucdavis.edu

Program Director:
Fadi Fathallah, Ph.D.



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Email: info@abilitytools.org

Toll Free Phone
(800) 390-2699

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