

## Handout 1-1: Can Diet Help Manage Chronic Disease?

A chronic disease is present much of the time and it can be due to genetic factors or lifestyle choices. Why do some people with chronic diseases seem more active or more able to function than others with a similar chronic disease? Could it be due to their genetic make-up? Could their choices of food affect their ability to cope with their condition? Can a person's diet help to manage their condition by allowing them to function more fully or be able to use a lower dose of medicine or less medicine?

You can look up information about any condition that you are interested in learning more about. You can consult the following web sites to get reliable information about a variety of chronic conditions:

- [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)
- [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)
- [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)
- [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)
- [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)

There are other web sites that you can get to by using a general search engine and typing a key word to access your site of interest. Be sure to look for a .gov, .edu, or .org website as these sites use reliable sources of information.

After you select a condition of interest, you can research whether a certain food may help you cope with a particular condition. For example, people with arthritis are encouraged to eat fish in order to get essential fatty acids. These polyunsaturated acids may play a role in reducing inflammation and pain. You can also find out if a certain food is an accepted part of a treatment plan for a chronic condition by consulting more than one website that has reliable information about that particular condition. If any particular food is recommended by more than one reliable website, it is relatively likely to be considered by several experts to be an acceptable part of a treatment plan for a chronic condition.