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Healthy goals, hard reality: Nearly half of adults doubt they can sustain lifestyle changes

Data highlights Americans' shifting preferences toward chronic condition management

New survey data from Medtronic, a global healthcare technology leader, is shedding light on how Americans are rethinking chronic condition management, amid evolving public views on the role lifestyle choices should play for health and well-being.

While lifestyle changes are a popular first step for patients managing chronic conditions – such as hypertension or overactive bladder – the data suggests that many adults find this approach difficult to maintain and are open to exploring new or complementary options.

The survey, conducted between February and March 2025 in partnership with Morning Consult, sought to uncover insights into Americans' perceptions of the management of illnesses, including chronic conditions, through pharmaceutical management, medical technology intervention or lifestyle changes. Data found that four in 10 U.S. adults (41%) are currently managing a chronic health issue, including 30% of millennials, 45% of Gen X, and 61% of baby boomers.

Lifestyle changes can support better health, but remain challenging

Nearly half (45%) of respondents said they doubt their ability to stick to lifestyle adjustments, and one-third (33%) said they would feel frustrated or anxious if they were prescribed only lifestyle changes by their doctor. Women report greater frustration when asked to rely on lifestyle changes as a primary treatment approach, at 20% compared to 14% of men.

All survey respondents ranked exercise, diet, and sleep as the most effective lifestyle changes for managing chronic conditions. However, they also cited these same habits as the most difficult to adopt. More than a quarter (28%) of respondents reported feeling doubtful that lifestyle changes can provide long-term results for their health.

"Often, by the time a patient is visiting me, they know they need help, may have tried lifestyle changes and are coming to me to understand what else they can do, what other options are available for them," said Melanie Ketchandji, M.D., Utica Park Clinic, Tulsa, Okla., a urologist who treats patients for overactive bladder and incontinence using the InterStim™ device. "This may include adding an advanced therapy to what they are already doing, which can feel less daunting or frustrating than only relying on lifestyle changes."

Multiple approaches may be key

The survey also took a pulse on Americans' broader views on technology as a possible therapeutic option for disease management, including medical devices or medical technology intervention. Half of adults said they would like to see medical devices offered earlier in the initial treatment approach, rather than reserved for use after lifestyle or pharmaceutical options have already been tried.

More than two-thirds (76%) would be more likely to try doctor-recommended lifestyle modifications if they were part of a larger treatment program that included medical devices or therapies. Today, new treatments like the Symplicity™ blood pressure procedure for hypertension, which disrupts overactive nerves leading to the kidneys, and implantable devices such as InterStim™, which stimulate nerves in the bladder for overactive bladder control, both individually complement lifestyle and medications to manage chronic conditions.

"My goal is to help my patients fully participate in whatever phase of life they are in. This is why I believe treatment choices should involve shared decision-making – based on the patient's values, preferences and treatment goals – a practice that continues to be supported by data and encouraged by physician guidelines," added Dr. Ketchandji. "It is important to truly listen to what the patient is saying and align on a treatment plan just for them, because managing chronic conditions is rarely a one-size-fits-all approach."

Survey methodology

The two surveys were conducted by decision intelligence company Morning Consult among a nationally representative sample of more than 4,400 U.S. adults between February and March 2025. It was commissioned by Medtronic to better understand how patients experience chronic condition care – and where there may be opportunities to improve outcomes.

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