

Facing illness puts a stress on the body, mind, and spirit. This booklet is designed to help you during the rough times all health issues create. I am all too familiar with these, since I have lived with a chronic, non-fatal illness for nearly twenty years. These are the kinds of prayers I have prayed myself, and I offer them in the hopes they might help you as well.

The prayers are divided into three sections. All of them are short because those of us who are dealing with illness may not have the energy for a long, drawn-out time of prayer. Sometimes the best we can do is a few heartfelt minutes.

Remember Romans 8:26: “For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.”

TWENTY-THIRD PUBLICATIONS *A division of Bayard* | Bayard CEO: Hugues de Foucauld  
One Montauk Avenue, New London, CT 06320 | (860) 437-3012 or (800) 321-0411  
[www.twentythirdpublications.com](http://www.twentythirdpublications.com)

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# Prayers for Illness

*These prayers can be used for all types of illness, but especially serious illnesses.*



## DENIAL

**Ponder** ✦ Many people, upon learning they have a serious illness, go into denial at first. It's only natural: denial is a stage of grief, and learning about a life-changing illness frequently triggers feelings of loss and grief. It's common to seek other medical opinions or even just to pretend that the diagnosis is a mistake or the disease will go away on its own.

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**Pray** ✦ *Lord, this can't be happening to me. There must be some mistake. The tests must have been wrong. I can't have \_\_\_\_\_ . That only happens to other people. God, help me to figure out the next steps.*

**Practice** ✦ Be proactive. Ask your health care provider questions. Find out what you can about your illness. Allow yourself time to work through your thoughts and feelings about the diagnosis.

## RELIEF

**Ponder** ✦ While many people go into denial upon learning they have a specific illness, others feel a surge of relief, even when the diagnosis is difficult to accept. After going from doctor to doctor and test to test, finally having a definite answer can come as an enormous relief.

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**Pray** ✦ *Lord, finally someone has figured out what is wrong. I'm not crazy. I'm not imagining it. There really is something going on. I feel a sense of vindication, comfort, and even hope. Now, maybe, there are some things that can be done. At the very least, now I can tell my friends and family what's wrong.*

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**Practice** ✦ Give thanks that even if the news is hard to accept, you now have a direction and a diagnosis. That alone can bring a sense of hope.

## FEAR

**Ponder** ✦ Fear, sometimes even terror, can set in when we receive a devastating diagnosis. This, too, is a normal reaction. Remember, even Jesus felt enormous fear in the Garden of Gethsemane as he contemplated his upcoming death.

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**Pray** ✦ *Lord, I am so scared. I can barely process what the doctors have told me. Help me find some place of calm so I can figure out what I must do and how best to do it.*

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**Practice** ✦ Feel the fear. Allow yourself to express it however helps you—by crying, journaling, talking with a friend, sitting in silence. And, of course, with prayer.

## BARGAINING

**Ponder** ✦ Bargaining is one of the most difficult stages of grief in illness. When someone we love dies, we must eventually accept it, but even in the case of a terminal illness, we may hold out hope for a cure or a new treatment or a new doctor. We may be tempted to tell God we will do everything we

# Chronic Illness

*If you live with chronic, non-fatal illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, fibromyalgia, COPD, depression, or other ongoing issues, you may not look sick, but you are still dealing with a serious illness. Prayer can help.*



## COMFORT

**Ponder** ✦ Even in the face of a life-altering illness, knowing what it is can bring a profound sense of comfort that comes from finally being able to put away some of the graver possibilities, such as cancer or another fatal disease. For instance, if you learn that your illness is asthma and not lung cancer, you can begin to plan for future life without the specter of surgery, chemotherapy, and death hanging over you.

**Pray** ✦ *Thank you, God, that what I have isn't one of the worst-case scenarios I've been imagining. I am grateful that I have been spared what my imagination has been conjuring up. This isn't as bad as it could be, and for that, I am so thankful.*

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**Practice** ✦ Giving thanks is a powerful healing mechanism. Even if your illness is something you will have to cope with for the rest of your life, giving thanks that you will have a “rest of your life” is an important aspect of dealing with chronic illness.

## LEARNING CURVE

**Ponder** ✦ If you are newly diagnosed with something like diabetes or COPD or asthma that requires ongoing, regular medical management, there will be a learning curve as you figure out what you need to do. This is especially true if your treatment requires something like insulin shots or the use of an inhaler; you need to learn how to use the equipment as well as how to monitor your condition.

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**Pray** ✦ *My God, this feels pretty overwhelming. I have so many things I need to learn how to do and so many things*

*I need to learn how not to do. All of a sudden, it feels like my life has been upended and all I do is try to figure out the next medical step. Give me clarity of mind so I can understand what the doctors are telling me and follow their instructions.*

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**Practice** ✦ There can be an enormous amount of information coming at you all at once. Keep a journal or notebook to help you remember instructions. If you can, take someone with you to medical appointments who can listen, take notes, and remind you of what was discussed.

## **GUILT**

**Ponder** ✦ Often, we think we should be able to accept chronic illness with the grace and serenity of a saint. When we can't, we may begin to feel guilty. After all, isn't it the hallmark of a Christian to accept suffering? Yes...and no. We are asked to accept the suffering that comes to us, but we are not asked to seek out more suffering. Even Jesus didn't actively seek pain until the end of his mission. When we begin to berate ourselves by adding