

# *Know Your Risk for Loneliness and Social Isolation*

Those who find themselves unexpectedly isolated due to the illness of a loved one, separation from friends or family, loss of mobility, worsening vision or hearing problems, disability, or lack of mobility or access to transportation, are at particular risk of loneliness and social isolation.

## **Preventing Isolation and Loneliness**

You also may be at greater risk if you:

- Live alone
- Can't leave your home
- Had a major loss or life change, such as the death of a spouse or partner, or retirement
- Struggle with money
- Are a caregiver
- Have psychological or cognitive challenges, or depression
- Have limited social support
- Have trouble hearing
- Live in a rural, unsafe, and/or hard-to-reach neighbourhood
- Have language barriers where you live
- Experience age, racial, and/or gender discrimination where you live
- Are not meaningfully engaged in activities or are feeling a lack of purpose

People with hearing loss may find it hard to have conversations with friends and family, which can lead to less interaction with people, social isolation, and higher rates of loneliness.

## **How Can You Talk with Your Doctor About Loneliness and Social Isolation?**

- If you are feeling isolated or lonely a lot of the time, you may want to tell your doctor or health professional. Talking about your health with your doctor means sharing information about how you feel physically, emotionally, and mentally. Describing your symptoms can help your doctor identify the problem.
- Make sure to bring up your concerns. For example, let your doctor know about any major changes or stresses in your life, such as a divorce or the death of a loved one. A doctor who knows about your losses is better able to understand how you are feeling. They can make suggestions that may be helpful to you.
- Be open and honest with your doctor about your health habits and what's happening in your life. It will help them to understand your medical conditions and emotional health more fully and recommend the best treatment options for you. Learn more about talking with your doctor.

## **How Can You Stay Connected with Friends and Family?**

There are things you can do to help protect yourself or a loved one from the negative effects of loneliness and social isolation.

- First, it's important to take care of yourself. Try exercising, eating healthy, getting enough sleep (7 to 9 hours), and pursuing activities you enjoy to help manage stress and stay as mentally and physically healthy as possible.
- Help spread the word about staying connected to combat loneliness and social isolation.
- It's also important to stay active and connect with others. People who engage in meaningful, productive activities they enjoy with others feel a sense of purpose and tend to live longer. For example, helping others through volunteering helps you feel less lonely and allows you to have a sense of mission and purpose in life, which is linked to better health. Studies show activities like these may help boost your mood and improve your well-being and cognitive function.

### **Here are some other ideas to help you stay connected**

Remember to take steps to help keep you safe and active during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Find an activity that you enjoy, restart an old hobby. You might have fun and meet people with similar interests.
- Schedule time each day to stay in touch with family, friends, and neighbours in person, by email, social media, voice call, or text. Talk with people you trust and share your feelings. Suggest an activity to help nurture and strengthen existing relationships. Sending cards is another good way to keep up friendships.
- Use communication technologies such as video chat, smart speakers, or even companion robots to help keep you engaged and connected.
- If you're not tech-savvy, sign up for an online or in-person class at your local community center to help you learn how to use email or social media
- Consider adopting a pet if you are able to care for them. Animals can be a source of comfort and may also lower stress and blood pressure.
- Stay physically active and include group exercise, such as joining a walking club or working out with a friend
- Introduce yourself to your neighbours.
- Find a faith-based organization where you can deepen your spirituality and engage with others in activities and events.
- Check out resources and programs at your local social service agencies, community and senior citizen recreation centers, and public libraries.
- Join a cause and get involved in your community.

### **In case you Need Help**

You may contact Agewell Helplines for older persons at +911129836486 / 29840484 Or write to [agewellfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:agewellfoundation@gmail.com)

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