

Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions

CDC, Alzheimer's Program, eHandout

Loneliness and social isolation in older adults are serious public health risks affecting a significant number of people in the United States and putting them at risk for dementia and other serious medical conditions.

Health Risks of Loneliness

- Social isolation significantly increased a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Social isolation was associated with about a 50% percent increased risk of dementia.
- Poor social relationships (characterized by social isolation or loneliness) was associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.
 - Loneliness was associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.¹

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CDC Priorities for Older Adult Mental Health

- Expanding work into social isolation and loneliness as a [social determinant of health](#).
- As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed over the year—and Americans have had to socially distance, struggled financially, and been continuously exposed to distressing information about the pandemic—reports of mental and behavioral health concerns have increased. Envisioned by CDC and funded by the CDC Foundation, the [How Right Now](#) (*Que Hacer Ahora*, in Spanish) campaign aims to address the needs disproportionately affected audiences.

CDC Resources for Older Adult Mental Health

- Podcast: [Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults and What You Can Do to Help](#). CDC's Dr. Craig Thomas highlights this growing problem before and during COVID-19.
- Podcast: [Caring for Caregivers with the CDC](#). CDC's Dr. Lisa McGuire focuses on paid and unpaid caregivers who often set aside their own physical and mental health needs while caring for others.

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¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. *Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults, Opportunities for the Health Care System*. Washington, D.C: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25663>