



TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

Stay Connected, Stay Healthy

The COVID-19 crisis has forced nearly every American to stay at home, or at least stay at home much more than usual. Although this has been necessary, it's important to make sure we're still making an effort to be social and connect with friends and family. After all, feeling lonely or being isolated are bad for your health. Loneliness and social isolation have been associated with higher rates of depression, a weakened immune system, heart disease, dementia, and even early death.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

While anyone can feel lonely, certain factors increase your risk. Major life changes or losses can increase feelings of loneliness. Older adults are at greater risk because they're more likely to live alone. Mobility issues can make it harder to leave the house. And sensory issues like vision and hearing loss can contribute to feeling isolated.

Experts suggest that you should make every effort to try to stay active and better connected if you:

- » live alone or are unable to leave your home
- » feel alone or disconnected from others
- » recently experienced a major loss or change
- » are a caregiver
- » lack a sense of purpose



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

IDEAS FOR STAYING CONNECTED

Find an activity that you enjoy or learn something new. You might have fun and meet people who like to do the same thing. Here are some other effective and straightforward strategies:

GET MOVING! Exercise decreases stress, boosts your mood, and increases your energy. Whether it's sweating to a workout video or taking a walk around your neighborhood, exercise can help.

VOLUNTEER. You'll feel better by helping others. Providing social support or helping others in need can give meaning to our lives and help combat feelings of isolation or disconnection.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS IN PERSON, ONLINE, OR BY PHONE. Many people are using technology to connect with friends and family virtually. Take time to reach out to others by phone or online. A call or video chat can remind you that you're not alone.

CONSIDER ADOPTING A PET. Animals can be a source of comfort and companionship. They may also lower stress and blood pressure.

Positive relationships with friends and family help us thrive. Without social connections, it's easy to feel lonely or isolated. No matter what your age, it's important for your health to stay socially connected. Loneliness can take a toll. Remember, it's linked to higher rates of depression and heart disease, and can weaken your immune system.

