

# Stay Connected and Feel Less Lonely

## Feeling Lonely

- Is a feeling that you do not belong, are not connected with social groups or you are emotionally isolated
- Can be feeling left out, empty or isolated from others
- Can be felt even when you live with other people
- Can be felt even if you are not depressed and can lead to depression
- Is not linked to being social

## How being lonely can affect your health

- Can be very hard on the health and well-being of older adults
- Can increase physical disabilities, or the ability to engage in common daily activities, and reduce mobility
- Can reduce your quality of life
- Can increase risk for cognitive decline

## What can cause loneliness?

- Health status that does not improve or is getting worse
- Loss of hearing or increasing visual impairment
- Being retired
- Loss of key relationships with others, such as a spouse, siblings, or friends

## What you can do:

- Talk with your healthcare provider, who can refer you to social workers or mental health providers – there may be social programs in your area that can be helpful
- Find out about local senior centers and get involved in group activities, which may help you feel less lonely or strengthen your emotional health
- Pursue hobbies that you enjoy or used to enjoy and find groups that share your interests (such as book clubs, volunteer groups, or service organizations)
- If you have a hard time leaving your home, there are phone and computer based programs that can connect you to group activities – talk with a social worker or mental health provider to find what programs are available

Visit these websites to find out more:

[www.nia.nih.gov/health/participating-activities-you-enjoy](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/participating-activities-you-enjoy)

[www.seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org](http://www.seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org)

[www.va.gov/geriatrics](http://www.va.gov/geriatrics) (visit the Well-Being section)



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