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
www.seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org
www.va.gov/geriatrics (visit the Well-Being section)