

## Loneliness



### Overview

The bonds we share with our friends and loved ones help us thrive. But what happens when we don't have enough of these connections? What happens when we don't feel like we are part of a community? We become lonely. And this loneliness can harm your health.

### No one to help

One way loneliness hurts you is by allowing you to form bad habits. Without others around to encourage you, you may not eat a proper diet. You may have trouble finding a reason to exercise. You may not go to see your doctor regularly. Over time, these bad habits hurt your health.

### Immune system

We think loneliness also affects your immune system. That's your body's defense system. If you're lonely, you may have trouble fighting off things like viruses and bacteria. And if you're lonely, your body may become inflamed more easily when you're injured. Chronic inflammation raises your risk for disease.

### Risk of disease

If you're lonely, you have a higher risk for health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure and Alzheimer's disease. Loneliness can lead to alcoholism and depression. And, it raises your risk for suicide.

### Getting help

Loneliness can happen to anyone at any age, and it can be hard to talk about. But there are ways to beat loneliness. Volunteering to help others is a great way to connect with people. And if you're depressed, a doctor can treat you with medication and therapy. If you're struggling with feelings of loneliness and sadness, tell your doctor so you can get the care you need.