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encounter
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a division of Encounter Telehealth, llc

Effects of Loneliness on Aging Health

Encounter Telepsychiatry, a division of Encounter Telehealth LLC, provides behavioral and mental healthcare in long term care communities.

Several recent studies have shown the impact that loneliness has on aging health in senior communities. In this report, we will discuss the causes and results of loneliness, and how to best manage feelings of isolation.

About Loneliness

Loneliness describes a person's perceived amount of social interaction. We experience loneliness when our desired quality and quantity of engagement with others is not met. There is a gap between what we want and what we are getting. Loneliness has been described as three related concepts:

1. Being Alone, or the time spent alone.
2. Living Alone, or our household arrangements.
3. Social Isolation, or the amount of social interaction we have with others—both individually and in social groups.

Quick Statistics

TIME reports that more than one third of adults over the age of 45 are lonely. More than 40% of seniors over 65 regularly experience loneliness. With over 6 million people over the age of 65 in long term care, the prevalence of loneliness and isolation is astounding.

The Impact

Loneliness is deadly to long term care residents in several ways.

Feelings of loneliness effect the levels of participation in physical activity for older people.

The more social support people have, especially from family members, the higher the levels of physical activity.

Therefore, people who are getting physical, occupational or restorative therapy are more likely to engage if they have a higher level of social support.

Participation in therapy determines recovery and ability to perform activities of daily living. It is also well established that increased physical activity improves mood and decreases anxiety.

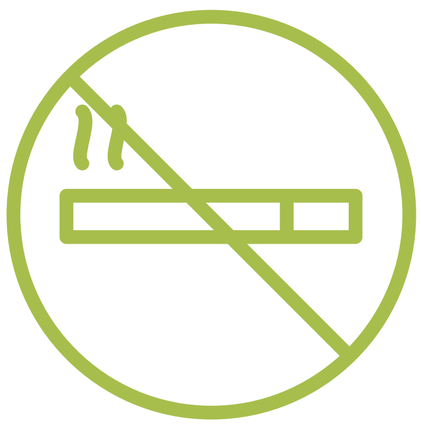
A lack of social interaction decreases physical activity and mobility, thus leading to anxiety and depression. Increases in sedentary time are directly linked to increased disease, poor well-being, and hastened death.

RECENT STUDIES

According to recent studies, loneliness has significant effects on both physical and mental health concerns. Social isolation increases the levels of stress hormones, such as cortisol, in the body.

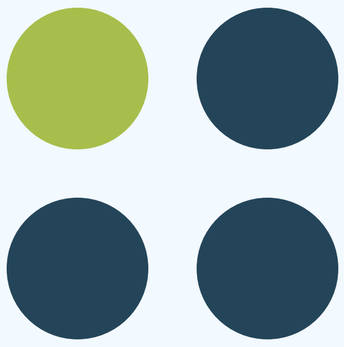
This response has been linked to conditions such as depression, alcoholism, heart disease, obesity, sleep difficulties, cognitive decline, and early mortality.

In fact, loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26%. It also increases the probability of developing clinical dementia by 64%.



The New York Times recently referred to loneliness as a "silent killer". The report suggests that social isolation is more lethal than obesity, cigarette smoking, or high blood pressure.

1 in 4 Americans now live alone, therefore loneliness is reportedly on the rise



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ENCOUNTER TELEPSYCHIATRY

WHAT WE OFFER

Our providers are focused on administering compassionate, consistent, and quality care.

Many of the facilities we service are skilled nursing facilities with patients suffering loneliness.

Loneliness can lead to negative thought patterns and low self-worth, which only perpetuates social isolation.

A form of psychotherapy, known as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), helps develop new ways of thinking to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, and loneliness.

CBT offers support through particularly difficult times such as loss, grief, illness, etc.

CBT helps people recognize their negative thought patterns and redirects them. This results in a more positive outlook and behavior changes.

PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION MANAGEMNET

Through Encounter, patients receive med management services by Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners. This ensures proper med management from the convenience of the facility.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations provide patients with proper diagnoses, and can therefore help treat their issues accordingly.

THERAPY

Many studies have indicated that patients do better when medication and talk therapy are used together, than when either one of them is used alone.

STAFF TRAINING

Proper training of staff can ensure quality healthcare and safety for everyone.

When staff is trained to use alternative, non-pharmacological interventions, studies have shown statistical benefits in patients.

Encounter reduces staff stress by providing healthcare within the convenience of the facility.

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RESOURCES

https://time.com/5404616/older-adults-loneliness/

https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2012/06/98644/loneliness-linked-serious-health-problems-and-death-among-elderly

https://longtermcare.acl.gov/the-basics/

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https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0190033

https://stonegatesl.com/one-is-the-loneliest-number-combating-senior-isolation/

https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/publications/feelings-of-loneliness-but-not-social-isolation-predict-dementia-onset(94302263-0bb3-4b91-b749-fd2fcb3fde87).html

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/09/opinion/sunday/britain-loneliness-epidemic.html

https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/about/pac-20384610