

The Importance of Staying Connected

As we age, staying connected with others becomes more important.

Time with friends and family, and community activities help to keep our minds and bodies healthy.

But, sometimes, life changes – like retirement, moving to a new home, health problems, or losing a loved one – can make it more difficult to stay social. When we don't have enough contact with others, we start to feel lonely. This is called social isolation, and it can affect both our mental and physical health.

What Is Social Isolation?

Social isolation happens when a person has few social contacts or feels left out. Even if you live with family, you can still feel lonely if your connections aren't strong or meaningful.

It's not just about being alone, it's about not feeling connected.

Why Social Connection Matters

Spending time with others helps lower stress, reduce feelings of depression, and boost our mood. Social connection can even help lower the risk of serious health problems. People who feel more connected tend to live longer, sleep better, and have better memory.

Research shows that being socially connected is just as important as eating well and staying active.

What Do the Numbers Say?

In Canada, social isolation is a growing concern for older adults.

According to Statistics Canada:

- 13% of adults aged 55 to 64 years, and 9% of adults aged 65 and older reported that they always or often feel lonely
- Approximately one-third of adults aged 55 to 64 and one-third of adults aged 65 and older, reported that they sometimes feel lonely
- Seniors who live alone are more likely to feel lonely than those who live with others.

These numbers remind us that many older adults may be feeling lonely, even though they may not always say so.

Ways to Stay Connected

There are many small steps you can take to feel more connected:

- Call a friend or family member regularly, even for just a short chat.
 - Join a local club or group, like a walking group, pickleball, lawn bowling, knitting circle, or book club.
 - Volunteer in your community. Helping others can help you feel good too.
- Use technology to stay in touch. Video calls, social media, email, and even texting can help you connect with loved ones from far away.
- Attend events at your local seniors' centre or library.