

Social engagement and health

What are the benefits of being socially engaged?^{1,2}

The link between being socially engaged and health¹

5 ways to get—or stay—socially engaged³

References

What are the benefits of being socially engaged?^{1,2}

Social relationships affect mental health, health behavior, physical health, and mortality risk. Engaging in social relationships benefits health. Social engagement can take many forms, from holiday gatherings with family to community events to spending time with friends. Studies show that people with meaningful social relationships are happier and live longer. These people have nearly 50% increased longevity, better emotional stability, higher self-esteem and fewer health problems.



The link between being socially engaged and health¹

There are a number of possible links between social engagement and health.

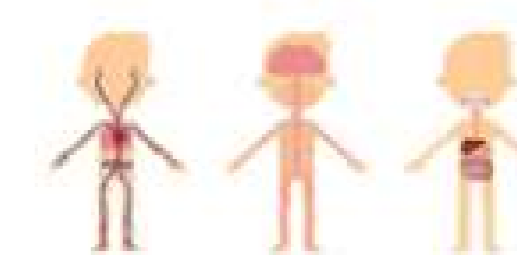
Behavioral - Health behaviors encompass a wide range of personal behaviors that influence health, morbidity, and mortality. For example, a spouse may monitor, inhibit, regulate, or facilitate health behaviors in ways that promote a partner's health. He or she may prepare healthy foods or encourage exercise. Social ties can instill a concern for others which can lead individuals to engage in behaviors that protect the health of others, as well as their own health.



Psychological - Psychosocial refers to something that involves both psychological (mental) and social aspects. In this case, it may be that people who are socially engaged may have a greater sense of purpose in life than people who are less engaged. This may lead to improved mental and physical health.



Physiological - Social engagement may work deep within the body and affect how it works. Supportive interactions with others benefit immune, endocrine, and cardiovascular functions. Socially supportive environments relieve harmful levels of stress that can have a negative effect on coronary arteries, insulin levels, and the immune system.



5 ways to get—or stay—socially engaged³

Connecting with others is a low-cost way to improve your own health—and the health of those around you. Here are 5 ways you can get started:



Introduce yourself

Introduce yourself to the people around you - the, neighbors, at the grocery store etc. This can be a great way to start a new friendship



Become a volunteer

Share your knowledge with a younger or less experienced person. Feeling useful has been linked to lower rates of depression and better functional health



Phone a friend or family member

Make a point to call one person each week to stay connected



Join a group

Most cities or towns have group activities for things like exercise, art or special interests. This can be a good way to meet people who like the same things as you.



Go online

Social media sites make it easy to reconnect with old friends or make new ones. Your social network may make you feel more supported and could result in less stress.

References

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