



## El aislamiento social y sus factores de riesgo

Humans are social beings. Our nature compels us to establish relationships with others to form social ties and communities. When this need goes unmet, it leads to what we know as social isolation. This is not just about feeling lonely; it is a problem that tends to arise when we have infrequent social contact. And as a result, social isolation has serious consequences for our physical and mental health.

We will tell you about the adverse effects of social isolation on our health, and you will learn to identify the risk factors so you can seek help right away, either for you or for a loved one.

### Health effects

According to recent studies, people with few social ties have a lower life expectancy than those with strong social ties<sup>1</sup>. Social isolation increases the likelihood of suffering cardiovascular and cerebrovascular conditions. <sup>2</sup>It can also result in conditions such as type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, and even dementia.<sup>3</sup>

Statistics show that isolation represents a greater risk to our lives than other risk factors, such as excessive alcohol consumption, lack of exercise, or obesity. It has been determined that isolation is just as harmful to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day. <sup>1</sup>

### How to identify risk factors<sup>4</sup>

The risk of experiencing loneliness or social isolation is higher for people with one or more of the following factors:

- Living alone and far away from friends, family, or a community support network
- Low income or having limited financial resources
- Mobility impairment or sensory disabilities
- Having undergone major changes, transitions, or recent significant losses
- Lack of transportation
- Exposure to patterns of community or domestic violence
- Being unemployed
- Feeling a lack of meaning or purpose in life
- Being a caregiver for a person with a serious health condition.
- Psychological and cognitive challenges
- Lack of a social support network
- Having a home in rural, inaccessible and insecure places
- Suffer from chronic diseases

### What can we do to reduce these risk factors?<sup>4</sup>

- Find an activity or hobby that you can do with a group of friends, neighbors or family
- Exercise
- Look for volunteer programs in which you can participate
- Take time to talk and connect with your family and friends, either in person or on the phone
- Consider adopting a pet

Just like with any other health condition, it is always a good idea to seek for help with your doctor or health professional when any of these risk factors is present for yourself or a loved one. There are options to obtain help and guidance to overcome social isolation and loneliness. By seeking help, you're taking the right step toward a longer and healthier life. [Click here to learn](#) about the many resources to help you move forward.

This health information does not substitute an evaluation with your doctor or health professional.

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Studies of Julianne Holt-Lunstad as cited in Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World, Vivek Murthy, MD Published by Harper Wave. 2020

<sup>2</sup> Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System, The National Academies of Science, Engineering, Medicine. 2020 by Julianne Holt-Lunstad

<sup>3</sup> Health Policy Brief: Social Isolation and Health, Health Affairs Organization, June 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Based on documents Feeling Lonely or Socially Isolated? and Staying Connected to Combat Loneliness and Social Isolation of the National Institute on Aging and the document Expand Your Circles – Prevent Isolation and Loneliness As You Age of Elder Care Locator