

# Breaking down barriers

## Social isolation

Social isolation can have a significant impact on your patients' overall well-being, especially for your elderly patients. On the flip side, increased social support can positively influence health outcomes – both behaviorally and psychologically – by helping people stick to healthier diets, reduce emotional stress and more.<sup>1</sup>

### Did you know?

**3 out of 5**

Americans consider themselves lonely<sup>2</sup>

#### Social isolation and loneliness lead to higher risks for:<sup>3</sup>

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Weakened immune system
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Cognitive decline
- Alzheimer's disease
- Death

#### Medicare spends an additional

**\$134**

on socially isolated individuals<sup>4</sup>



Lonely people are **27%** more likely to use skilled nursing facilities, and their monthly costs are **\$75 higher**<sup>4</sup>

#### Loneliness can also increase care utilization<sup>5</sup>



**68%**  
higher hospitalization

**57%**  
higher ER visits



# Five things you can do to help



## Start the conversation

Create space for patients to talk about their loneliness by asking validated questions. Many **tools** exist to help guide conversations with patients and assess how they are feeling.



## Encourage connections

Share the 24/7 Institute on Aging's **Friendship Line** for people 60+ experiencing mental health challenges or loneliness: 800-971-0016. You can also suggest prayer lines or pen pal programs.



## Know the local resources

Provide patients a list of contact information for adult day cares, specific support groups or volunteer opportunities (like foster grandparent programs) in your area.



## Assure them they're not alone

Remind patients they can **call 211** to connect with human service agencies and community organizations that can best help those in need of assistance.



## Identify those at risk

If a patient seems to need more urgent help, share the 24/7 **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** for people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis who need support: 800-273-8255.

**For more resources, visit [CareAllies.com](https://www.careallies.com).**

1. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/social-cohesion>
2. <https://www.cigna.com/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/>
3. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>
4. <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2017/10/medicare-spends-more-on-socially-isolated-older-adults.pdf>
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12224678/>

