

The effects of loneliness on health

By Jane E. Brody, New York Times

The potentially harmful effects of loneliness and social isolation on health and longevity, especially among older adults, are well established. For example, in 2013 I reported on research finding that loneliness can impair health by raising levels of stress hormones and inflammation, which in turn can increase the risk of heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and even suicide attempts.

Among older people who reported they felt left out, isolated or lacked companionship, the ability to perform daily activities like bathing, grooming and preparing meals declined and deaths increased over a six-year study period relative to people who reported none of these feelings.

Writing for the *New York Times's* department The Upshot last December, Dhruv Khullar, a physician and researcher at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York, cited evidence for disrupted sleep, abnormal immune responses and accelerated cognitive decline among socially isolated individuals, which he called "a growing epidemic."

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