

Your Health



Health Partners Newsletter May 2022



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Mental Health Awareness Loneliness



"I wish I could show you when you are lonely or in darkness the astonishing light of your own being." **Hafiz**

Mental Health Awareness Week 2022 takes place between 9-15 May. This year's theme is loneliness, an emotion many have experienced during the pandemic.

Lockdown and working from home/new ways of working have highlighted the fact that, for some of us, life can be a desolate place at times. Loneliness, in turn, can affect our mental health. Some research suggests that loneliness is associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, sleep problems and increased stress. Loneliness can contribute to higher levels of distress, resulting from people's sense of isolation and reduced ability to connect with others. Our connection to other people, our workplaces and the communities we live in is fundamental to protecting our mental health. We can all play a part.



What is loneliness?

We may think we know what it is but one common description of loneliness is the feeling we get when our need for rewarding social contact and relationships is not met. However, loneliness is not always the same as being alone. You may choose to be alone and live happily without much contact with other people, while others may find this a lonely experience. Alternatively, you may have lots of social contact - or be in a relationship or part of a family - and still feel lonely. This is especially if you don't feel understood or cared for by the people around you.

Tips for dealing with loneliness

- If you've felt lonely for a long time, it can be daunting to meet or open up to new people; however, there is no rush. You could try an online activity to start off with or be a spectator and then later join in.
 - Reach out – there is a lot of support out there from people just like you; people who use their own experiences to help and support each other, including experiences of loneliness and related mental health problems. Take a look at Side by Side <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/side-by-side-our-online-community/>
 - Get out there and meet people. Try to join a class or group based on your hobbies or interests. This could include online groups if you can't attend things in person. Alternatively, volunteering is a good way of meeting people. Helping others can also really help improve your mental health. Check out Do-it <https://doit.life/>
 - Talk about it: have you told people you feel lonely? Others may not realise how you feel. Alternatively, you could speak to a helpline such as the Samaritans, who provide impartial advice <https://www.samaritans.org/>
 - Talking therapies or counselling allow you to explore and understand your feelings of loneliness and can help you develop positive ways of dealing with them. Explore more <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapy-and-counselling/how-to-find-a-therapist/>
- You are enough: you don't need to compare yourself to others – in fact, they may be putting on a front and be loneliness themselves.
 - Look after you: get enough sleep, eat your five a day and do some physical activity – you might even meet people. Try to spend time in nature or volunteer at an animal shelter. And avoid drugs and alcohol – they may seem like a short-term fix but can make you feel worse and more isolated in the long term.

Sources/references:

- **Mental Health Foundation, MIND, Samaritans, Do It.**





Watch out - the sun's about

“We all shine on...like the moon and the stars and the sun.” **John Lennon**

Too much sunlight is harmful to your skin. It can cause skin damage including sunburn, blistering and skin ageing and, in the long term, can lead to an increased risk of skin cancer.

Skin cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in the UK with over 50,000 new cases every year.

A tan is a sign that the skin has been damaged. The damage is caused by ultraviolet (UV) rays in sunlight.

Make sure you:

- Spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm when outdoors
- Make sure you don't burn
- Cover up with suitable clothing and sunglasses
- Take extra care with children's exposure when outside in the sun
- Use at least factor 30 sunscreen (against UVB) and at least a 4-star UVA protection. UVA protection can also be indicated by the letters "UVA" in a circle, which indicates that it meets the EU standard.

You should take extra care in the sun if you:

- Have pale, white or light brown skin
- Have freckles or red or fair hair
- Tend to burn rather than tan
- Have many moles
- Have skin problems relating to a medical condition
- Are only exposed to intense sun occasionally (for example, while on holiday)
- Are in a hot country where the sun is particularly intense
- Have a family history of skin cancer
- Are on any prescribed medication that makes you more susceptible to sun and heat (check the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine).



Find out more about skin cancer at

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/skin-cancer/types-of-skin-cancer>

When working outdoors, hot weather may have an adverse impact on employee health if not managed correctly. Simple ways to minimise harm include:

- Rescheduling outdoor work to cooler times of the day
- Providing more frequent rest breaks and introduce shading to rest areas
- Providing free access to cool drinking water
- Supplying shade in areas where individuals are working
- Encouraging the removal of personal protective equipment when resting to help encourage heat loss
- Educating workers about recognising the early symptoms of heat stress.

The law does not state a minimum or maximum temperature for indoor working. However, if a significant number of employees are complaining about the heat, your employer should undertake a risk assessment and act on its results.

Sources: NHS, Macmillan.



Act FAST on Stroke

F



Face:

Face Drooping

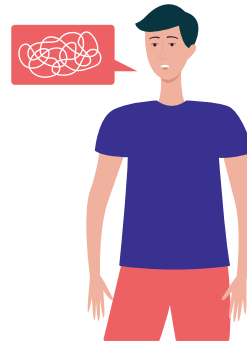
A



Arm:

Face Drooping

S



Speech:

Face Drooping

T



Time:

Time to call 999

“Life's a climb. But the view is great.”

Miley Cyrus

Stroke strikes every five minutes and 100,000 people have strokes every year in the UK.

A stroke is a brain attack. It happens when the blood supply to part of your brain is cut off. Blood carries essential nutrients and oxygen to your brain, so without blood, your brain cells can be damaged or die.

This damage can have different effects, depending on where it happens in your brain. The injury to the brain caused by a stroke can lead to widespread and long-lasting health problems. Because the brain controls everything we do and how we think, depending on which part of the brain is injured, a stroke can impact on how the body functions and how you communicate, think and learn. Although some people may recover quite quickly and the effects may be relatively minor, many people who have a stroke need long-term support to help them regain as much independence as possible.

Unfortunately not everyone survives a stroke; that's why it's so important to be able to recognise the symptoms and get medical help as quickly as possible. The sooner a person receives treatment for a stroke, the less damage is likely to happen.

For many people, a stroke happens suddenly and without warning. A stroke is a medical emergency. If you have any stroke symptoms you need to call 999 immediately.

You may start off in accident and emergency or another assessment ward, but it is likely you will be quickly admitted to an acute stroke unit, which has a range of trained professionals experienced in stroke care. The quicker your stroke is diagnosed and treated, the better your recovery will be. A brain scan can show what type of stroke you have had. A CT scan or an MRI scan will show whether your stroke has been caused by a blockage or by a bleed. A stroke can happen to anyone, of any age, at any time. It's vital to know how to spot the warning signs of a stroke in yourself or someone else.





Using the FAST test is the best way to do this:

- **Face:** Can the person smile? Has their face fallen on one side?
- **Arms:** Can the person raise both arms and keep them there?
- **Speech problems:** Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say? Is their speech slurred?
- **Time:** If you see any of these three signs, it's time to call 999.

There are two main types of stroke:

- **Ischaemic stroke:** this is caused by a blood clot. Ischaemic means a reduced blood and oxygen supply to a part of the body. It is usually caused by blood clot in an artery, which blocks the flow of blood. This occurs in about 85% of cases
- **Haemorrhagic stroke:** this is due to bleeding in or around the brain. A haemorrhagic stroke can happen when an artery inside your brain bursts, causing bleeding within your brain. This is known as an intracerebral haemorrhage.

A TIA or transient ischaemic attack (also known as a mini-stroke) is the same as a stroke, except that the symptoms last for a short amount of time. It is caused by a blockage cutting off the blood supply to part of your brain. This can cause sudden symptoms similar to a stroke, such as speech and visual disturbance, and numbness or weakness in the face, arms and legs. However, a TIA doesn't last as long a stroke and often only lasts for a few minutes or hours and fully resolve within 24 hours.

Find out more about stroke at
<https://www.stroke.org.uk/>

Sources: Stroke Association, NHS.



Say no to Hypertension



“Health is the ultimate source of happiness and successful human life.” **Anuj Jasani**

Hypertension (also known as high blood pressure) does not normally have noticeable symptoms. An estimated 46% of adults around the world with hypertension are unaware that they have the condition.

When symptoms do occur, they can include early morning headaches, nosebleeds, irregular heart rhythms, vision changes, and buzzing in the ears. Severe hypertension can cause fatigue, nausea, vomiting, confusion, anxiety, chest pain, and muscle tremors.

If untreated, hypertension increases your risk of serious problems such as heart attacks, strokes, heart disease, heart failure, peripheral arterial disease, aortic aneurysms, kidney disease and vascular dementia. Around a third of adults in the UK have high blood pressure, although many will not realise it. The only way to find out if your blood pressure is high is to have your blood pressure checked.

High blood pressure

Blood pressure is recorded with two numbers:

- Systolic pressure (higher number) is the force at which your heart pumps blood around your body
- Diastolic pressure (lower number) is the resistance to the blood flow in the blood vessels.





As a general guide:

- High blood pressure is considered to be 140/90mmHg or higher (or 150/90mmHg or higher if you're over the age of 80)
- Ideal blood pressure is usually considered to be between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg.

Blood pressure readings between 120/80mmHg and 140/90mmHg could mean you're at risk of developing high blood pressure if you do not take steps to keep your blood pressure under control. Everyone's blood pressure will be slightly different. What's considered low or high for you may be normal for someone else.

Causes of high blood pressure

You might be more at risk if you:

- Being overweight
- Eating too much salt and not eating enough fruit and vegetables
- Not doing enough exercise
- Drinking too much alcohol or coffee (or other caffeine-based drinks)
- Smoking
- Not getting much sleep or having disturbed sleep
- Being over 65
- Having a relative with high blood pressure
- Being of black African or black Caribbean descent
- Living in a deprived area.

Reducing high blood pressure

Making healthy lifestyle changes can sometimes help reduce your chances of getting high blood pressure and help lower your blood pressure if it's already high.

Examples include:

- Reducing the amount of salt you eat (<5g per day)
- Having a generally healthy diet
- Limiting the intake of foods high in saturated fats, e.g. animal fats, butter, cheese, processed meats
- Eliminating/reducing trans fats in your diet, e.g. margarine, some cooking oils, pastries
- Cutting back on alcohol
- Losing weight if you're overweight
- Exercising regularly
- Cutting down on caffeine
- Stopping smoking
- Reduce stress
- Regularly check your blood pressure.

Doctors can help you keep your blood pressure to a safe level using:

- Lifestyle changes
- Medicines.

What works best is different for each person. Talk to your doctor to help you decide about treatment.

Sources: WHO, NHS, Diabetes.co.uk, OptingHealth.