



Risk factors and positive actions in relation to social isolation

Although social isolation is most common in the elderly, younger adults (eg, housebound and disabled due to multiple sclerosis or a single mother of young children) may also be affected by both social isolation and loneliness. Reduced social contact, being alone, isolation and feelings of loneliness are associated with reduced quality of life.

Loneliness refers to how individuals evaluate their level and quality of social contact. Social isolation can be more accurately measured (eg, by the number of social contacts the person has). Well-being may not be positively correlated with social contact and a great deal depends on the nature of the contacts made.

For some people, solitude is a way of life which temperamentally suits them and they may not feel lonely even if they have no visitors.

General practitioners and community nurses are in a unique position to identify loneliness, as they are in contact with the three groups most at risk - ie very old people, bereaved people, and people with disabilities.

- The extent of loneliness amongst older people has been stable in the last 60 years. Only 7% of older people report severe loneliness and there is no evidence to suggest that older people are lonelier now than in the past.^[2]
- Loneliness is common in carers, especially resident carers. Other groups at risk of loneliness include older married women, older people who live with married children, those living in sheltered housing or residential care and older people who emigrated from other countries (especially those who do not speak the language well).
- Loneliness seems to be less prevalent in those rural areas where a sense of community still remains than it is in more densely populated urban areas.
- Lack of money limits the opportunities for overcoming loneliness: those on lower incomes are more prone to feelings of loneliness than those who are better off

- Both isolation and loneliness impair quality of life and well-being. However only social isolation (and not loneliness) has been shown to be associated with increased mortality.
-

Social isolation

What are the risk factors	What lead to this
1	
2	
3	
How can you cope with social isolation	What actions can you take to avoid this
1	
2	
3	

Write down in the box below what you think three or more indicator of social isolation might be.

What do you think the risk factors are that can lead to social isolation? Try to list as many as you can giving at least 3 risk factors

Risk factor leading to social isolation	Reasons why you believe this
---	------------------------------

To prepare you for living in a new community we are all going to participate in an activity, this activity will be chosen for you but you will decide amongst yourself what part each of you take in this activity. Each of you will be assessed on your participation and your performance throughout.

We will now participate in a community activity, as the setting we are currently working in may limit this;