

 An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)



MENU

Navigate to:



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2023

Contact: ASH Media

202-205-0143

ashmedia@hhs.gov

New Surgeon General **Advisory** Raises **Alarm** about the **Devastating Impact** of the **Epidemic** of Loneliness and Isolation in the United States

 [Back to top](#)

Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy Calls for Action to Address Public Health Crisis, Lays Out Framework for a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection

Today, United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy released a new Surgeon General **Advisory** calling **attention** to the public health **crisis** of **loneliness**, **isolation**, and **lack of connection in our country**. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately half of U.S. adults reported experiencing measurable levels of loneliness. Disconnection fundamentally affects our mental, physical, and societal health. In fact, loneliness and isolation increase the risk for individuals to develop mental health challenges in their lives, and lacking connection can increase the risk for premature death **to levels comparable to smoking daily**.

The **Surgeon General's Advisory on Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation** - PDF </sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf> lays out a **framework** for a **National Strategy to Advance Social Connection**, which has never been implemented before in the United States. It details recommendations that individuals, governments, workplaces, health systems, and community organizations can take to increase connection in their lives, communities, and across the country and improve their health.

*“Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated **public health crisis** that has harmed individual and societal health. Our relationships are a source of healing and well-being hiding in plain sight – one that can help us live healthier, more fulfilled, and more productive lives,”* said **U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy**. *“Given the significant health consequences of loneliness and isolation, we must prioritize building social connection the same way we have prioritized other critical public health issues such as **tobacco, obesity, and substance use disorders**. Together, we can build a country that’s **healthier, more resilient, less lonely, and more connected.**”*

The physical health consequences of poor or insufficient connection include a **29% increased risk of heart disease, a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults**. Additionally, lacking social connection increases risk of **premature death by more than 60%**. ^{to top}

In addition to our physical health, loneliness and isolation contribute substantially to mental health challenges. In adults, the risk of developing depression among people who report feeling lonely often is more than double that of people who rarely or never feel lonely. **Loneliness** and social **isolation** in childhood increase the risk of **depression** and **anxiety** both immediately and well into the future. **And with more than one in five adults and more than one in three young adults living with a mental illness in the U.S.**, addressing loneliness and isolation is critical in order to fully address the mental health crisis in America.

While the epidemic of loneliness and isolation is **widespread** and has profound consequences for our individual and collective health and well-being, there is a medicine hiding in plain sight: **social connection**.

Social connection is beneficial for individual health and also improves the **resilience of our communities**. Evidence shows that increased connection can help reduce the risk of serious health conditions such as **heart disease, stroke, dementia, and depression**.

Communities where residents are more connected with one another fare better on several measures of population **health**, community **safety**, community **resilience** when natural disasters strike, **prosperity**, and civic **engagement**.

This Surgeon General's Advisory lays out a framework for the United States to establish a National Strategy to Advance Social Connection based on **six foundational pillars**:

- 1. Strengthen Social Infrastructure:** Connections are not just influenced by individual interactions, but by the physical elements of a community (parks, libraries, playgrounds) and the programs and policies in place. To strengthen social infrastructure, communities must design environments that promote connection, establish and scale community connection programs, and invest in institutions that bring people together.
- 2. Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies:** National, state, local, and tribal governments play a role in establishing policies like accessible **public transportation** or **paid family leave** that can support and enable more connection among a community or a family.
- 3. Mobilize the Health Sector:** Because loneliness and isolation are risk factors for several major health conditions (including heart disease, dementia, depression) as well as for premature death, **health care providers are well-positioned to assess patients for risk of loneliness and intervene**. [Back to top](#)
- 4. Reform Digital Environments:** We must critically evaluate our relationship with technology and ensure that how we interact digitally does not detract from meaningful and healing connection with others.
- 5. Deepen Our Knowledge:** A more robust research agenda, beyond the evidence outlined in the advisory, must be established to further our understanding of the **causes** and **consequences** of social disconnection, populations at risk, and the effectiveness of efforts to boost connection.
- 6. Cultivate a Culture of Connection:** The informal practices of everyday life (the norms and culture of how we engage one another) significantly influence the relationships we have in our lives. We cannot be successful in the other pillars without a culture of connection.

Surgeon General's Advisories are public statements that call the American people's attention to a critical public health issue and provide recommendations for how it should be addressed. Advisories are reserved for significant public health challenges that need

the American people's immediate attention. As the Nation's Doctor – the 21st Surgeon General of the United States – Dr. Murthy has focused much of his work, research, and public platform on how the nation can emerge from the pandemic stronger than before, including his recently-issued Surgeon General's Advisories on Youth Mental Health [/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html) and Health Worker Well-Being [/surgeongeneral/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/health-worker-burnout/index.html), and the Surgeon General's Framework on Workplace Well-Being [/surgeongeneral/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html).

You can read the full Advisory **here** - PDF [/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf). For more information about the Office of the Surgeon General, please visit www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities>.

###

Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other news materials are available at <https://www.hhs.gov/news> [/news](https://www.hhs.gov/news).

Like HHS on Facebook [↗](#) [/disclaimer.html](#), follow HHS on Twitter @HHSgov <https://twitter.com/#!/hhs.gov> [↗](#) [/disclaimer.html](#), and sign up for HHS Email Updates <https://cloud.connect.hhs.gov/subscriptioncenter>.

Last revised: May 3, 2023

[↗](#)
Back
to top

Sign Up for Email Updates

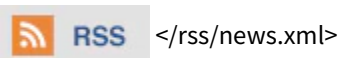
Receive the latest updates from the Secretary, Blogs, and News Releases

Sign Up

<https://cloud.connect.hhs.gov/subscriptioncenter>

Subscribe to RSS

Receive latest updates



Related News Releases

Biden-Harris Administration Hosts Inaugural Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Mental Health Summit </about/news/2023/07/21/biden-harris-administration-hosts-inaugural-asian-american-native-hawaiian-pacific-islander-mental-health-summit.html>

Statement by HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra Celebrating the One-Year Anniversary of the Launch of 988 </about/news/2023/07/16/statement-hhs-secretary-xavier-becerra-celebrating-one-year-anniversary-launch-988.html>

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Adds Spanish Text and Chat Service Ahead of One-Year Anniversary </about/news/2023/07/13/988-suicide-crisis-lifeline-adds-spanish-text-chat-service-ahead-one-year-anniversary.html>

Related Blog Posts

[^](#)
Back
to top



</blog/2022/09/01/ocr-celebrates-national-recovery-month.html>

The HHS Office for Civil Rights Celebrates National Recovery Month </blog/2022/09/01/ocr-celebrates-national-recovery-month.html>

Media Inquiries

For general media inquiries, please contact media@hhs.gov.

Content created by Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH)
Content last reviewed May 3, 2023

Sign Up for Email Updates

Receive the latest updates from the Secretary, Blogs, and News Releases.



Back to top

Sign Up

<<https://cloud.connect.hhs.gov/subscriptioncenter>>



<http
s://w
ww.f
acebook.c
om/h
hs>



<http
s://t
witter
.com
/hhs
gov>



<http
s://w
ww.i
nstag
ram.c
om
/hhs
gov/>



<http
s://w
ww.li
nkedi
n.co
m
/com
pany
/us-
depa
rtme
nt-of-
healt
h-
and-
hum
an-
servi
ces/>

<https://hhs.gov>

HHS Headquarters

200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20201

Toll Free Call Center: 1-877-696-6775

Back
to top