



Staying Socially Connected This Winter

<https://acl.gov/news-and-events/acl-blog/staying-socially-connected-winter>

Winter is soon upon us. While some may enjoy the colder climates, others may start withdrawing from activities and disconnecting from family and friends. Those who suffer from seasonal depression will face an even harder battle as they withdraw until springtime returns. The decline of outdoor activities, followed by a lack of social interaction during the winter months, could easily lead you to feel isolated and lonely.

Research shows that social isolation and loneliness can have a detrimental impact on your health and well-being. In fact, studies by Julianne Holt-Lunstad at Brigham Young University found that prolonged social isolation is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and more harmful than obesity. Other studies have found that being socially isolated increases your risk of being targeted for abuse and neglect. Older adults who lack social connections or report frequent feelings of loneliness also tend to suffer higher rates of injuries, infection, depression, cognitive decline, and early death. That is a profound impact!

Social isolation is complex. Chronic disease, speech or hearing impairments, inadequate transportation options, and settings that are not accessible for people with physical and mental disabilities can each make social isolation worse. You may choose to stay home, where you feel comfortable, because you feel anxious or embarrassed about your health or disabilities. Depression, anxiety, early-stage dementia, and other mental health concerns, can also increase your risk of social isolation. Additionally, if you no longer drive and have limited, or no, access to public transportation, you are more likely to face social isolation. This is a particular concern in many rural communities.

In addition to social isolation being complex; it is not always easy to spot. Just because you live alone, or

spend a lot of time alone, doesn't mean you are socially isolated and you can be socially isolated even if you have an extroverted personality and appear socially engaged. Social isolation is not about being in a room full of people, or having a lot of "friends" on social media, it is about feeling connected.

Feeling connected means being understood. People often isolate themselves because they feel no one understands what they are going through.

So, how do you spot social isolation? You may want to start by thinking about how you have changed over time. For example, are you less excited about things you once enjoyed? Do you feel distant from people or misunderstood? If you are a caregiver, does your loved one seem less excited about events they once looked forward to, such as the annual car show or regular social functions? These changes could be red flags indicating social isolation.

Your risk of social isolation can increase as you get older for a variety of reasons, including bereavement and greater risk of disabilities that affect mobility or communication.

You may be wondering, what can be done? Studies show that being active and engaged in your community are great ways to tackle social isolation.

Some ways to engage in meaningful social activities include:

- Volunteering or mentoring in your community
- Visiting your local senior or community center
- Seeking out leadership roles in a civic organization or faith community
- Signing up for a cooking, exercise, falls prevention, chronic disease self-management, or other classes
- You can also learn about assistive technology solutions, such as hearing aids and wheelchair ramps, which can make it easier for you to stay active in your community. If you are a caregiver, encourage your loved ones to engage in meaningful social activities that increase opportunities for socialization.



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If your loved one is unable to get out of the house, a daily phone call or visitor can make a huge difference.

Ultimately, tackling social isolation is about making our communities more accessible, inclusive, and caring. If you think someone in your community is at risk of social isolation, you can start by reaching out. Try asking if they would like a visit or invite them to join you on an outing.

Written by Keri Lipperini, Director, Office of Nutrition and Health Promotion Programs, Administration for Community Living



Adapting To Isolation

Having a mobility-related disability can create numerous challenges in navigating the physical and built environment, especially during winter. Such weather-related challenges can be a significant barrier to participation in everyday activities and are linked with increased physical and psychological sicknesses.

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/disability-accessibility-covid-19_ca_5e8c5993c5b62459a92edf27

A 2019 study found that 38 per cent of disabled-identified Canadians and 27 per cent of Canadians with mobil-

ity challenges who don't identify as disabled experience high levels of social isolation and loneliness.

“Community care,” or interdependence, is the belief that people should rely on one another rather than individual efforts for their well-being, especially in the absence of larger structural supports.

Before the pandemic, community care is how many in the disability community survived. Friends help with chores, find work, order food, send money, and drop off groceries when individuals with disabilities have been too sick to work or take care of their home.

Most of us know that social connections increase our resilience. However, we may not be aware that absence of a strong social network—loneliness—has a direct impact on our health. Loneliness is complicated by stigma. Admitting that you're lonely is often perceived as admitting that you're a failure in some way. Lonely people must surely be misfits or socially inept. Especially in this age of social networking, it's easy to believe that loneliness must mean that you are truly unworthy of human connection or companionship.

Psychologist John Cacioppo notes that loneliness is a bigger problem than people realize and has serious consequences. Chronic loneliness is linked to a range of health issues such as low immune function, heart disease, depression and ultimately a shorter life. Chronic or long-term social isolation increases our stress response as if our bodies are waiting for a dire threat. Cacioppo points to the evolutionary nature of this reaction. Being alone, for our distant ancestors, meant abandoning the protection of the group and jeopardizing one's genetic contribution to the next generation.

Loneliness is not measured by the number of social connections we have but rather by the quality of those relationships. Our fast-paced, urban and insular lifestyle is often cited as a cause of loneliness. A Globe & Mail article provides perspectives on loneliness, “the longing that dare not speak its name.” For those of us living with disabilities and chronic illness, addressing loneliness is vital. Strategies



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for increasing and improving social connections, however, are diverse and will require some self-reflection. If you feel that you could benefit from growing or nurturing your social network it may be useful to consider activities you enjoy and existing relationships you might enhance.

by Shelley Hourston

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Food Security in Edmonton

Edmonton Food Bank

- Please call 780-425-4190 (Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.) to speak confidentially with a Client Services worker.

Jasper Place Wellness Centre

- Food4Good is our approach to food security in West Edmonton. We work with community members and other community-focused organizations to create access to and education around good food.
- Tony is our program coordinator if you are looking to connect with any of our programs or if you are interested in volunteering contact him today at 780-481-4001 or tonyh@jpwc.ca

YEG Community Response to COVID19- Facebook group

- To ensure Edmontonians in need have a space where they can reach out and access the support they need in order to weather the COVID19 pandemic. No one is left behind. For more information, please email us: yegcommunityresponse@gmail.com

Meals on Wheels

- Edmonton Meals on Wheels connects people who need a little help with those who want to help! Very often, our caring volunteers become part of our client's social support network. This is how we nourish and feed both body and soul. Edmonton Meals on Wheels is not just for seniors. In fact, 13% of our clients are under 60. 780- 429-2020

WECAN Food Basket Society

- Buy a \$5 annual membership to join WECAN Food Basket Society. Membership period runs from April to March. 780-413-4525

E4C

- e4c increases food security by providing essential supports, such as three meals a day in our emergen-

cy shelter and building knowledge and skills around food access and nutrition. Want more information or need help? You can reach us at 780-424-7543 or info@e4calberta.org

Collective Kitchens

- Small groups of people who get together on a regular basis to plan and cook meals.
- Collective Kitchen members share ideas and recipes. They also learn and improve their basic cooking skills. Fees are \$3.00 - \$5.00 per person, which covers the cost of food.
- For more information or to find a kitchen, please contact Diane Thursby, Alberta Health Services Collective Kitchens Coordinator at 780.735.3044 or diane.thursby@albertahealthservices.ca

Alberta Avenue Collective Kitchen

- Adults and children who will be participating in the cooking. There is no childcare and no space for children who are too young or not wanting to participate. Please only bring one child per adult. You MUST register by the Sunday prior to the event. Alberta Avenue members and other local league members get priority.
- <https://timecounts.org/alberta-avenue/opportunities>; 9210 118 Avenue,

Millwoods United Church

- Mill Woods United is pleased to sponsor and host the South East Edmonton Collective Kitchen on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.
- Participants must sign up and pay in advance by contacting Karen at 780- 461-7773.

The City-Wide Collective Kitchens program

- Participants share ideas and recipes. They learn and improve basic cooking and life skills, which include planning, shopping, adjusting recipe quantities, determining nutritional choices, and preparing meals for themselves and their families. For some participants, it's an opportunity to practice and improve their spoken and written English. By cooking together sharing food and time, money is saved as well as developing social support. 780- 478 5022, Dickinsfield Amity House, info@amityhouse.ca, <http://www.amityhouse.ca/>



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YMCA of Northern Alberta

- Groups prepare two to three meals per session and portions can be ordered at a cost of \$3 each. Participants are asked to bring their own take away containers.
- For more information or to register for a virtual class, please call the YMCA Boyle Street Plaza 780-426-9265.

Salvation Army

- Salvation Army community meal programs provide nutritious free meals in a caring manner that dignifies and respects the individual. These meals often act as a gateway to access other Salvation Army services. Community Resource Centre – 9620-101A Avenue NW. 780-424-9222

Rental Increases & Evictions

<https://www.alberta.ca/rental-evictions.aspx>

Scheduled rent increases may take effect provided proper notice has been given to tenants. They were not permitted during the state of public health emergency, and cannot be applied retroactively.

Late fees that are a reasonable estimate of the landlord's losses can be applied to late rental payments if set out in the rental agreement. Late fees were not permitted from April through June and cannot be applied retroactively for that period.

Landlords and tenants are encouraged to continue working together to develop payment plans where the tenant is struggling to pay rent due to the impacts of COVID-19. However, demonstration of a payment plan is no longer required to file an application to terminate a tenancy nor to recover possession due to non-payment of rent. If the landlord and tenant have already agreed to a payment plan, that plan remains in place for the agreed-to time period.

Tenants must be served a written notice that states the reason for the eviction and the date the tenancy is to end.

Tenants can dispute an eviction, unless it is for unpaid rent. If the tenant objects to the reason, the landlord must go to the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS) or court for an order terminating the tenancy and to get possession of the premises. Both par-

ties can present their arguments to the RTDRS or Court. At any time, a landlord and tenant can agree between them to end the tenancy by a certain date and save the expense of taking the matter to RTDRS or Court.

Reasons for eviction

The most common reason for an eviction is when a tenant fails to pay rent. Tenants can't withhold rent to force the landlord to do something, such as making repairs. The landlord is legally entitled to have the rent paid in full when it's due.

If the tenant cannot pay the rent and lets the landlord know beforehand, the landlord can let the tenant stay and pay rent later or over time. However, the landlord is under no obligation to do this. Other reasons for eviction include:

- breaking rental agreement terms
- damaging the rental premises
- disturbing or endangering others in the rental premises

Types of notices

There are 3 types of notices, and each one is used in a specific situation:

At least 24-hour notice

- used in the event of significant damage to the premises or physical assault or threat to physically assault the landlord or another tenant

At least 48-hour notice and at least 14-days notice.

- used in the event of an unauthorized occupant. See Unauthorized occupants section below for details.

At least 14-days' notice

- used in the event of a substantial breach

The Consumer Contact Centre can provide information on many topics related to landlords and tenants: Phone: 780-427-4088; Toll free: 1-877-427-4088



Province of Alberta

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT



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