

# Is wedded bliss the secret to good health?

February 15 2018, by Cahli Samata

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For years, it's seemed like the jury was officially out on marriage being good for your health. But could the changing social landscape mean that's no longer the case?

When you take someone in sickness and in health, does it mean you'll

have less sickness and more health?

It's a question many researchers have tried to answer. In the [vast sea of papers](#) on the topic, a lot do seem to indicate a positive [relationship](#) between marriage and [physical health](#).

But is it really so clear cut? Is the science telling us that, if we liked it, then we should've put a ring on it?

Let's take a walk down the aisle to find out.

## **Healthily ever after**

Just like the honeymoon after the wedding, let's start with the good stuff.

Your spouse might sometimes drive you crazy, but it turns out they could be good for keeping your mind healthy.

[Research published in the \*Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry\*](#) found that widowed and lifelong single people had a higher risk of dementia than their coupled cohorts.

Wedded bliss may also heal your [heart](#) with your mind.

All those loved-up feelings of marriage fittingly benefit our major love muscle. But those benefits aren't exclusive to couples who officially tied the knot.

[Research has found](#) being in an intimate relationship—married or otherwise—reduces your risk of [coronary heart disease](#).

But on the flipside, if those relationships were poor quality, it actually worsened the risk. A stressful marriage could literally be breaking your

heart.

## Unhappy wife, unhappy life

Being unhappily married doesn't just hurt your heart. Marriage quality has also been found to be important for [personal wellbeing](#) and [physical health](#).

Distressed marriages can even [lower your immune function](#), meaning you could be getting sick often and for longer.

If happier marriages are healthier, maybe the secret to marriage's healing powers is actually happiness. And if that's the case, does the marriage part even matter at all?

## You can get by with a little help from your friends

Though we've looked time and time again into correlations between marital status and wellbeing, we still don't really know if there's anything specific about marriage that boosts health.

The popular theory is that the [protective effects](#) of marriage are the reason for the [health](#) benefits we see. Spouses who love each other protect each other by encouraging healthy lifestyle choices and providing social support. When your husband or wife nags you to cut down on the junk food or see a doctor when you're looking crook, they could be saving your life.

When Dr. Paul Carter found marriage made people [more likely to survive a heart attack](#), he suspected it was the relationships behind them that helped, [saying](#): "We need to unpick the underlying reasons a bit more, but it appears there's something about being married that is

protective, not only in patients with heart disease but also those with [heart disease](#) risk factors. We're not saying that everyone should get married though. We need to replicate the positive effects of [marriage](#) and use friends, family and [social support networks](#) in the same way."

And if this is the case, the good news for singles is you probably don't need to get hitched if you have other protective relationships. Close relationships with parents, friends, coworkers or roommates might just do the job.

But if you do want to marry, do yourself a favour and marry someone you have a great relationship with. Because the right partner could be the key to a long and healthy life, while the wrong partner is just going to break your heart.

This article first appeared on [Particle](#), a science news website based at Scitech, Perth, Australia. Read the [original article](#).

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