

Five things to know about loneliness in older adults

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Loneliness, an emotional state rather than a mental disorder, can substantially affect the health of older adults, as well as use of health care services. A "Five things to know about ..." practice article in *CMAJ*

(*Canadian Medical Association Journal*) summarizes key points to help clinicians understand the effect of loneliness on older patients.

Loneliness is

- an [emotional state](#) of perceived isolation
- common in older adults and linked to declines in health
- as harmful as other [risk factors](#) for death, such as obesity and smoking
- a significant predictor of health care usage
- possibly alleviated by "social prescribing" to connect lonely adults with community supports and social networks

"Our health care system and society are increasingly recognizing loneliness as a serious public health problem, but clinicians are often unprepared to properly assess and manage lonely patients," says Dr. Nathan Stall, a research fellow at the University of Toronto and Women's College Research Institute and a geriatrician at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, Ontario.

More information: *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2019). www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.181655

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