

Did you know that [27% of adults](#) over age 60 live alone? That's more than one out of every four older adults!

Some older adults choose to live a solitary life. Others live alone due to separation from children and family members, death of a spouse, and other forces outside of their control.

The effects of social isolation can be dangerous for older adults - not just for their physical health, but also for their mental well-being.

Whether you or your loved one are living alone, it's vital to understand the risks of social isolation. In this article, we'll show you what you need to know about isolation in older adults, and how The Peristyle at Beau West can help.

## Mental Health and Social Isolation

As we age, our focus often shifts to maintaining physical health, but mental health for older adults is just as important. Socializing plays an essential role in our mental health.

What is social isolation? Social isolation refers to a lack of social network, including friends, family, neighbors and other relatives.

As people get older, we go through some unavoidable changes in life. Our children grow up and move away. Friends and family members age and start to pass away, and we may lose a spouse to death or divorce.

All of these changes can quickly result in social isolation for older adults.

### The Effects of Social Isolation

Seniors are sometimes stereotyped as quiet, tired, and happy to be alone. Some people may be more naturally introverted, but everybody needs social interaction to feel happy and healthy. Social and emotional needs are especially important for seniors, who may be limited physically.

Depression is an effect of social isolation and a serious health concern for seniors. Older adults are also at high risk for misdiagnosis and mistreatment of their depression.

Older people are likely to [suffer from comorbidities](#) like chronic illness, cancer, or diabetes. For older people living with home healthcare or in assisted living, rates of depression can be as high as 13.5%.

Non-institutionalized seniors may have more trouble connecting with others and forming social circles. At The Peristyle at Beau West, we offer [community fitness classes](#) taught by experts in senior fitness. These classes are an excellent choice for you or your loved one to stay healthy, meet new friends, and feel connected with your community.

## Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia, and Social Isolation

For people with Alzheimer's Disease or Dementia, depression is a common symptom. These people are especially likely to feel lonely because of their condition, which can make it hard to interact with others. People are more likely to socially exclude those with dementia because they don't know how to respond to their condition.

Living alone, and having few friends is associated with a [greater risk](#) of developing cognitive and memory problems.

The Peristyle at Beau West recognizes the importance of social interaction for people with Alzheimer's and Dementia. We take pride in our [award-winning memory care](#) program, providing ample social activities for older adults.

# Substance Abuse and Social Isolation

People who feel socially isolated are prone to depend on substances for dealing with feelings of loneliness. We saw this exemplified during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Addiction is also a socially isolating disease. It leads people to avoid interactions with others because they depend on the substance to feel good and have fun.

Social isolation, loneliness, depression, and pain are common problems affecting older adults today. These issues may be temporarily relieved by drinking alcohol and abusing medications.

Studies have shown that [substance abuse in seniors](#) is hazardous. As we age, our bodies cannot process drugs and alcohol as quickly and efficiently as they once did, and people on multiple medications risk overdosing or mixing drugs.

## How to Combat Social Isolation

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm, please call the US national suicide hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Coping with social isolation and loneliness isn't easy. Here are a few suggestions you can try to help yourself, or a loved one break out of the isolation cycle:

### Call a Loved One

When you're feeling down, sometimes all you need is a person to listen to you. Talking to a loved one, like a friend, child, sibling, or neighbor, will help to alleviate feelings of loneliness.

Modern technology is a fantastic tool for seniors to use. Face-to-face video calls, emails, text messages, and phone calls are all excellent methods for staying in touch.

Some older adults are hesitant to reach out to others because they are afraid of burdening them with their problems. Adult children are often busy with kids of their own, and friends aren't always available to talk. However, we must acknowledge that older people have emotional and social needs just like all other people, and it's important that they reach out for help when they need it.

### Join a Class or Support Group

Joining a class or group will encourage you to come out of your shell and interact with others at least once per week. Classes are a great way to meet new people with similar interests, share stories, promote hobbies, and make friends.

Connect with your local community center, gym, or church for classes and groups that interest you. There are so many subjects available in classes and clubs. From cars and motorcycles to baking, gardening, yoga, and fishing, the options are endless.

### Volunteer

Volunteering is one of the best activities older adults can be involved in. Like joining a class, volunteering generally prescribes weekly social interactions and helps seniors feel involved and helpful in their community.

Studies have shown that volunteering can even [reduce mortality risk](#) by up to 47% in middle-aged and older adults. Volunteers boost their health and help themselves while also helping others in their community.

For volunteering opportunities, reach out to local food banks, animal shelters, homeless shelters, schools, and churches. You're sure to find a cause you're passionate about.

## **Conclusion**

Social isolation is a significant risk factor for older adults' mental, emotional, and cognitive health problems. People who feel lonely are more likely to put their health at risk by abusing substances and prescription medications. By spreading awareness of the effects of social isolation, we can work together to encourage rich social lives for all seniors.

If you're ready to break out of social isolation and learn more about care options at The Peristyle at Beau West, check out our services page or give us a call at (985) 606-4822.