





Social Isolation Risks and Tips

Living with heart disease often leads to social isolation, which worsens heart health by increasing stress, inflammation, depression, and unhealthy habits (like poor diet/exercise), raising risks for worse outcomes, hospitalizations, and early death; conversely, strong social ties protect your heart by reducing stress and promoting healthier behaviors, making proactive connection vital. For women with existing heart disease, isolation increases the risk of recurrent events and mortality.

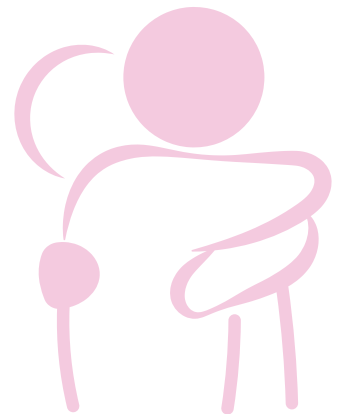
Staying socially connected is not just good for your mood — it's vital for your heart.

Why Social Isolation Matters for Women with Heart Disease ^[1]

-  Higher Risk of Heart Events: Social isolation and loneliness are linked to an 8% higher risk of cardiovascular disease and a 5% higher risk of stroke or heart attack in older women.
-  Emotional Stress: Isolation can worsen anxiety and depression, which are known contributors to heart disease progression.
-  Reduced Health Monitoring: Women who are socially isolated may miss regular checkups, delay seeking care, or lack support in managing medications and lifestyle changes.
-  Impact on Recovery: After cardiac events, isolated women often have slower recovery and poorer outcomes.

Who's Most at Risk?

- Women over 65 living alone
- Those with limited mobility or chronic illness
- Women from marginalized communities or with caregiving burdens
- Individuals with recent bereavement or life transitions



Signs of Social Isolation

- Reduced social contact: Rarely calling, visiting, or engaging with friends/family.
- Withdrawal from activities: Stopping hobbies, clubs, or community involvement.
- Emotional changes: Persistent sadness, anxiety, or irritability linked to loneliness.
- Neglecting health routines: Missing appointments, forgetting medications, or poor diet.
- Physical cues: Fatigue, sleep disturbances, or worsening symptoms.

Tips to Stay Connected and Heart-Healthy

Build Social Support:

- Join heart health or women's wellness groups (online or in-person)
- Schedule regular calls or visits with friends and family
- Use technology to stay in touch — video chats, messaging apps, or virtual meetups

Prioritize Mental Health:

- Practice mindfulness, journaling, or guided relaxation
- Seek counseling or peer support if feeling persistently lonely
- Talk to your doctor about emotional well-being during checkups

Stay Physically Engaged:

- Participate in group exercise classes or walking clubs
- Volunteer or take part in community activities
- Keep a routine that includes movement and outdoor time

Monitor Your Heart:

- Keep up with medications and appointments
- Track symptoms and share updates with a trusted person
- Ask your care team about cardiac rehab or support programs

Key Takeaway:

Social connection isn't a luxury; it's a crucial part of managing heart disease, just like diet and exercise.

Sources: [1] Harvard Health, JAMA Network Open, American Heart Association, Stanford Lifestyle Medicine

Take Action Today!

Advocating for your heart health starts with understanding heart disease and other conditions that affect your cardiovascular system. Learn your numbers, follow your care plan, and work closely with your healthcare team. Small, consistent steps can make a big difference for your long-term heart health.

Additional Information for Women:

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Our Mission

The HeartLife Foundation is a patient-driven charity whose mission is to transform the quality of life for people living with cardiovascular diseases by engaging, educating, and empowering a global community. We aim to create lasting solutions, drive innovation, and build healthier lives for patients, caregivers, and families worldwide.

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