

# The Health Benefits of Friendships

You don't choose your family, but you do get to choose your friends. Maybe that's why friendships have such a powerfully positive impact on physical and emotional well-being.

## Good Friends = Better Health

Friends enrich your life and enhance your health in multiple ways:

- If your friends lead healthy lifestyles, they may encourage you to do the same. Think of it as positive peer pressure.
- A strong social network also helps fend off loneliness. If loneliness becomes an ongoing issue, it can take a toll on your body, increasing your risk for long-term health problems.
- Loneliness and social isolation have been linked to depression. When you're depressed, it's harder to muster the energy and motivation to take care of your health.



From on-screen bromances to buddy comedies, male friendships play a big role in many movies. But they're even more important in real life. Social support is associated with staying healthier and living longer.

## Tips for Building Friendships

In contrast, social support helps boost your overall well-being. But what if you're running a little low on friends? Here's how to restock your supply:

- **Make a list of people you already know who are positive and supportive.** Interact with at least one person on your list every day, whether in person, by phone or online.
- **Take a hobby-related class.** It's an opportunity to meet people with shared interests.
- **Volunteer for a good cause.** Helping others is a proven way to combat loneliness.
- **Join a recreational sports league.** You'll meet teammates while you get exercise.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by loneliness or depression, seek help from a mental health professional. It's not just your happiness at stake. It's your health, too.



Sources include the American Heart Association, Mental Health America and the National Institutes of Health.