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.

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.

For more health and wellness tips, visit sutteremployer.org.