



Campaign Launched to Fight Loneliness Among At-Risk Seniors

November 16, 2016

While senior citizens face many increased health risks, the threat of social isolation may be one of the most overlooked risk factors.

So, a new campaign is being launched Wednesday to diminish the very real health effects associated with chronic loneliness and social isolation.

The campaign is being spearheaded by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging along with the AARP Foundation and is focused on at-risk seniors.

"It is estimated that one in five adults over age 50 are affected by isolation, a problem that has been associated with higher rates of chronic disease, depression, dementia and death," the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, a membership association representing agencies focused on aging issues, said in a statement Wednesday.

Loneliness has been found to have physical effects as well as an emotional impact, according to the National Institute on Aging (NIA).

"People who are lonely frequently have elevated systolic blood pressure," according to the NIA. "Loneliness is a unique risk factor for symptoms of depression, and loneliness and depression have a synergistic adverse effect on well-being in middle-aged and older adults."

Researchers have found that social bonds can be associated with overall better health, including the release of less inflammatory hormones, according to the NIA.

The campaign is focused on raising awareness about the dangers of social isolation for seniors and to encourage family members to talk about it during the holidays. Officials are scheduled to unveil specifics of the campaign at 4 p.m. ET Wednesday.