

Connect Well for Health

Social life may play a larger role in a person's health than one might think. A recent study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill made a concrete connection between living a longer, healthier life, and maintaining social connections.

The first of its kind, the study connected relationships with real measures of physical well-being, including high blood pressure, abdominal obesity and inflammation — health issues that can lead to long-term problems like heart disease, stroke and cancer. The research builds upon previous work that found older adults live longer if they have more social connections. Researchers said the conclusions from this study were even more promising — determining that a person's social relationships play a role in decreasing health risk.

Dr. Sudhir Gokhale, a psychiatrist at Advocate Christ Medical Center and Advocate Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn, IL, echoes the importance of social relationships at all stages of life. "The effect of emotional health on physical well-being is being understood more and more clearly as research continues," says Dr. Gokhale. "This particular study points out the importance of quality and supportive relationships in life.

Feeling connected with others seems to be showing a strong positive influence on reducing the risk of depressive disorders," he says. "And now we know it also has a strong impact on various physical parameters." Dr. Gokhale stresses that physicians and health care providers should also emphasize the significance of social relationships on health as much as advocating for eating right and exercising.

***Prayer:** Holy One, you created us to live in community. May we take care to nurture our relationships with each other and bring love and care to those who are alone.*

Wishing you joy and good health,
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