

The importance of friends as you age

As we age, the role of friendship changes. It becomes more important than ever to have strong, healthy relationships with others.

- Having friends helps prevent loneliness and isolation which can damage your health.
- Friendships strengthen your immune system. They can help you recover from illnesses more quickly and can even help improve your cognitive function.
- Look for ways to build your social circle. This can include volunteering, joining a gym or taking a class.

Having a solid social group of friends and connections can have a positive effect. That social support can come from family, friends, neighbors or even caregivers. It can take the form of support groups, social or religious groups, or other community resources.

How to make new friends: When it comes to building a social circle, experts suggest finding people who share your interests. Here are some good ways to meet new people:

- Volunteer to help someone else. Volunteering is a great way to meet people who share your values and passions.
- Take a class. A class can give your brain a workout and introduce you to some study buddies.
- Join a gym. The local gym can help you keep fit and meet new friends.

- Get involved with your faith. Check out events happening at your local place of worship.
- Tap into social media. Sites like Facebook can help you find and reconnect with old friends.
- Join a senior center or community group. They offer programs and events like exercise classes, book clubs and social events where you can meet and connect with others.

Finally, a great way to make new friends is to attend local events and get involved in local culture. Search for art exhibits, concerts, neighborhood block parties and festivals. These events are a chance to mingle with your neighbors and make new friends. Your health will thank you.