PATIENTS COMMUNITY
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Social Relationships are Key to your Quality of Life

Social relationships are a key component of quality of life for many older people and volunteers who thrive in a collaborative social network.

However, this has change in light of the current events surrounding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Social distancing measures being imposed by the Government requires people in certain risk categories, including the over 70 age-group to self-isolate for many weeks.

Loneliness and social isolation can have a serious effect on an individual's physical, mental and social health. But the risks of social isolation depend not only on who you are, but also on where you live. Like many seniors I live in a very small rural village without streetlights, a shop or community venue. As I work and travel, I have limited social contact with neighbours, however this unprecedented pandemic has brought many communities together. I have personally witnessed this in our village by neighbours kindly bringing our small community together through both social media and information leaflets with contact information posted through our letter boxes. It has certainly demonstrated camaraderie by these kind individuals providing their personal contact details offering their support especially for people requiring assistance with shopping, collecting prescriptions, maintaining social contact etc.

With this in mind I have attached some tips and advice that you will hopefully find helpful for the "at risk group" and seniors having to remain involuntarily indoors for several weeks:

1. Ensure your phone contacts are current and up-to-date with neighbours/GP/Pharmacy/local shop details.

2. Recharge your mobile phone regularly.

3. Remain connected to family and friends through social media: phone calls, email, text, WhatsApp, Skype etc.

4. Try to connect with people who you haven't heard from in a while.

5. Make sure you have hot and cold drinks regularly throughout the day and keep active and mobile, in order to increase blood flow.

6. Food is a vital source of energy so ensure you have fresh vegetables and eat a sensible diet – no raiding the fridge or comfort eating with lots of biscuits (my personal failing!).

7 As well as your close family, ask friends and neighbours to keep in communication to ensure you have social relationships as community support networks can actually help us stay well and positive when in isolation from others.

8 Also, to ensure personal safety be extra vigilant when unexpected strangers call.

9 Consider informing your neighbour if you are expecting a delivery and ask if he/she would be prepared to accept on your behalf.

10 Keep a close eye on your stock cupboard and freezer and order food as needed.

11 Make sure you have your prescriptions delivered.

12 Inactivity can hamper circulation so it's important to keep your joints moving by simple exercises – attached.

13 Keep your fingers active by recommencing or learning how to knit, crochet and cross stitch, jigsaw puzzles and crossword books – brilliant for keeping hands and mind active!

14 If you have an artistic mind, then this maybe the time to start drawing and/or painting in water colours.

15 Walk or exercise in the fresh air (as long as you remain two metres away from people as directed by Government guidelines, see link below).

16 Try good old fashion home baking with old and new recipes – it can be extremely therapeutic for some.

17 Reading is also very relaxing, listen to music, watching old movies/ videos and catch up programmes on television is a way of social connectivity as there is a constant stream of documentaries, drama, current affairs etc.

18 Take advantage of the Spring weather and make time to repair/clean the garden shed and ensure the lawn mower is ready for action – it may seem rather onerous to begin with, but it is immensely satisfying once you've finished spring cleaning your shed.

19 When we are in an involuntary situation, we may experience a change to our sleep pattern so think about organising a balanced range of activities in your day as outlined above - including physical exercise, connecting with others and pleasant relaxing activities as this may help with sleep quality.

20 mind.org Some people staying at home as part of social distancing may experience a deep sense of loneliness whilst other may experience feelings of anxiousness or worried about coronavirus and its impact on their lives – visit www.mind.org for information regarding social isolation etc

21 Last but not least: keep active, look after your legs and keep your legs elevated when sitting for long periods and drink plenty of water to keep hydrated

Please keep safe in these troubled times, with the support already shown I feel sure we will emerge as a closer and more supportive community. For more advice about social distancing and who is affected, follow this link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults