

# News For Older Americans

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## How Older Adults Can Combat Loneliness And Social Isolation Through Exercise

(NAPSA)—When discussing health, people typically think of physical health—their weight, strength, mobility, and potential health issues they are facing. However, when looking at overall well-being, it's important to think beyond the physical and focus on mental health as well.

This is especially true for older Americans, as many are tackling physical and mental health issues alone. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 11 million people ages 65 and older are living alone and are at risk for loneliness or social isolation. These issues can impact a person's mental and physical health significantly, leading to high blood pressure and disease, as well as depression. In fact, according to a Harvard Health study, "loneliness has an equivalent risk factor to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, shortening one's life span by eight years."

Social isolation can also make it harder for people to take control of their health as they do not have a network to support and motivate them to remain socially or physically active. Activities that not only make people healthier but also allow them to connect with others can help those at risk for social isolation and improve health and well-being. SilverSneakers, the nation's leading community fitness program designed specifically for older adults, has seen the power of socialization combined with fitness, firsthand.

For more than 25 years, SilverSneak-



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**An exercise class can be a great place for older adults to make new friends.**

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ers has been helping older adults enjoy and get the most out of life by engaging participants in physical activity, as well as fostering new friendships with a welcoming member community. Through exercise and social interactions, SilverSneakers helps people maximize their health and well-being, and maintain an active lifestyle—recognizing that community is just as important as the fitness aspect. In fact, a recent survey of SilverSneakers members revealed that 65 percent of members have made new and valuable friendships through the program.

Community exercise programs like SilverSneakers help engage older adults in social activities and give them a built-in network of support, while also offering the benefit of improving their physical health.

To find out if you are eligible for SilverSneakers or to find a class in your area, visit [www.SilverSneakers.com](http://www.SilverSneakers.com).