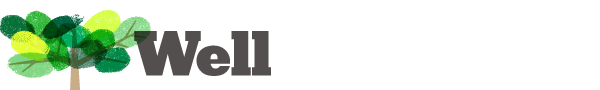
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**Loneliness May Be Bad for Your Heart**

**By**

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Loneliness may make you sick.

Researchers, [writing in the journal Heart](http://heart.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/heartjnl-2015-308790), pooled data from 23 studies and found that social isolation or feelings of loneliness were tied to an increased risk for coronary heart disease and stroke.

The studies included data from 181,006 men and women 18 and older. There were 4,628 coronary events and 3,002 strokes in follow-up periods ranging from three to 21 years. Three of the papers measured loneliness, 18 looked at social isolation and two included both. Social isolation and loneliness were determined with questionnaires; the researchers depended on medical records and death certificates for determining coronary events and stroke.

The scientists found that loneliness and social isolation increased the relative risk of having a heart attack, angina or a death from heart disease by 29 percent, and the risk of stroke by 32 percent. There were no differences between men and women.

“People have tended to focus from a policy point of view at targeting lonely people to make them more connected,” said the lead author, Nicole K. Valtorta, a research fellow at the University of York in England. “Our study shows that if this is a risk factor, then we should be trying to prevent the risk factor in the first place.”

The authors acknowledge that this was a review of observational studies and did not establish cause and effect.