COVID-19 Webinar Series
Session 9: Social Isolation and Loneliness

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High Prevalence of Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older Adults

1 in 4 live alone in the community

44% of women over 75 live alone

50% of those with lower incomes report being lonely

Most experience worse outcomes and mortality
Costs and Consequences of Social Isolation

The health damage caused by isolation and loneliness is estimated to increase the risk of early death by 26%.

It has been equated to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

It is estimated to cumulatively cost Medicare an additional $6.7 billion each year.
Research Shows Significant Increased Risk for Many Chronic and Debilitating Conditions

- Functional Limitation: 59%
- Developing Dementia: 50%
- Stroke: 32%
- Incident Coronary Heart Disease: 29%
- Cancer Mortality: 25%

Key Opportunities to Address Social Isolation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

• Screening for isolation and referring to digital and telehealth support
  ➢ Use validated tools to evaluate the impact it could have on the health of members or patients, and refer them as needed to appropriate supports.

• Expanding access to telehealth for mental health care
  ➢ Several promising flexibilities for telehealth broadly but mental health providers struggle to provide services in new environment

• Increasing access to internet and smartphones
  ➢ Nearly 50% of older do not have broadband service or smartphones. Precedent for Medicare and Medicaid to provide to vulnerable populations.