

## Beat the Winter Blues: Stay Connected and Healthy



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Winter in Western New York can be harsh or lovely, depending on your perspective. But with shorter days and colder weather, it's harder to stay connected. For seniors or people with limited mobility, winter can cause feelings of loneliness and isolation that harm mental and physical health. The good news? Some simple steps can make a difference!

- **Recognize the Signs.** Feeling sad, withdrawing from activities, or experiencing changes in sleep and appetite are common indicators that isolation may be impacting you.
- **Stay connected with family and friends.** Phone calls, video chats, or even handwritten notes can lift your spirits—and theirs. If mobility is difficult, try senior centers, faith communities, or virtual social groups.
- **Small, meaningful interactions matter.** Invite a neighbor or friend for coffee, watch a favorite movie, or try a new hobby. Step outside your comfort zone!
- **Prioritize self-care.** Focus on rest, good nutrition, and movement. Short walks or gentle stretches can help boost your mood and energy. It's okay to say "no" to overwhelming commitments and instead focus on what makes you happy.
- **Reach out.** Tell people you trust how much connecting with them means to you. Simply letting someone know you enjoy their company often keeps the relationship active. They will likely appreciate it just as much as you do.

Staying connected this winter isn't just about socializing; it's about safeguarding your health and well-being, and finding ways to lift the spirits of yourself and others. If feelings of sadness persist or worsen, seek support from a healthcare professional. To learn more about Health Plans from VNS Health, visit [www.vnshealthplans.org](http://www.vnshealthplans.org) or call 1-877-908-6288.

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