



## Interventions for Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults Who Experienced a Fall: A Systematic Review

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### Summary

Falls can be extremely harmful for older adults, resulting in a range of psychological problems. This review looked at how well different programs help prevent or reduce loneliness and social isolation in older adults living independently in the community who have experienced a fall. A total of four studies were found, with only one study showing a small improvement in loneliness.

### What does this mean?

This review does not have enough research to draw strong conclusions. More information is needed to understand which programs work best to reduce loneliness and social isolation among older adults who have experienced falls. Given the limited number of results, more research should be done on older adults to better understand their unique needs. Future work should develop more effective tools to measure loneliness and social isolation, followed by running long-term studies to see if the benefits are sustainable.

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Thank you to our patient partners for sharing their lived experience and insights, which helped shape the direction and relevance of this project.

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### What is the current situation?

Each year, more than **37 million falls require medical care** and result in **650,000 deaths**, making older adults the most vulnerable age group. Two major consequences of falls among older adults are social isolation, an objective experience measured by the presence or absence of relationships with other people, and loneliness, a subjective experience that is difficult to measure. Social isolation and loneliness among older adults are linked to negative health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and memory problems. The rising number of falls and related health outcomes signal the need to share prevention and reduction strategies for social isolation and loneliness among older adults.

### What questions did we aim to answer in our research?

What interventions are effective at preventing or reducing social isolation and/or loneliness in older adults who live independently in the community and have experienced a fall?

### How did we approach these questions?

We conducted a **systematic review** on MEDLINE, Embase, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, and Ageline to search for studies published until February 2020. Two independent reviewers completed this process and included a total of four studies based on the eligibility criteria.

### What answers did we find from our research?

All **four studies** varied in program design. Three studies included a choir singing group, health team approach, and community care program, and showed no improvement in social isolation or loneliness. Only one study, with a well-rounded health assessment program focused on fall risks, medication, and frailty, showed a small improvement in loneliness.

### How confident are we in these findings?

With only four studies included and **no significant improvements** found in social isolation and loneliness, **our confidence is limited**. More research with older adults and the development of new strategies are needed to better understand how older adults can reduce social isolation and feelings of loneliness, and improve overall health and well-being.