Connect:
It’s good for your health!

Social connections are a sense of belonging to others and to a neighborhood or community. Neighborhoods with places to gather and positive activities strengthen a sense of belonging and trust.

Social connections help...

- **Mental health.** Being part of a group or community helps you survive in tough times.
- **Physical health.** Communities with activities and places to gather reduce isolation, obesity, hypertension and diabetes among residents.
- **Longevity.** You are 50% less likely to die in the next year if you belong to a group.
- **Community recovery after emergencies.**

Here’s what you can do:

- Get to know your neighbors. Share emergency plans with them. Eat together. Offer to help one another.
- Develop and keep at least three close relationships—people you can count on for help—like a ride to the doctor or childcare.
- Talk face to face rather than over social media or the phone when you can.
- Get involved in a cause that’s important to you.
- Join a club, team or group where you live, learn, work or play.

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Connecting with others is good medicine.

What happens to your body when you connect with others in person?

• Your body releases chemicals called endorphins and oxytocin when you talk face to face or over the phone with someone. These happy hormonal responses help to decrease depression, calm your nervous system and promote bonding.

• When you feel support from others, your levels of the stress hormone cortisol drops. Lower levels of cortisol prevent weight gain and decreases stress on your heart and internal organs.

• Your immune system gets a boost in fighting viruses.

Good company also promotes better living. Groups who exercise together or support one another to improve health—like support groups for diabetes or weight management—help you stay accountable for healthy choices, decrease blood pressure and stabilize insulin levels.

Increase and strengthen your connections with others!

• Sign up for an art class, CPR course, emergency preparedness seminar or any class that interests you.

• Join a book club, chess club, car club, bowling league, walking group. Or any group!

• If you’re retired, contact a local school district, community center or library to talk about teaching a skill or hobby to others.

• Take your dog to the dog park.

• Call your loved ones regularly. Make time to get together in person when possible.

• Join a supportive group for parents and guardians, living with chronic conditions, losing a loved one, or living in recovery, to name a few.

• Increase your civic engagement. Join a neighborhood watch, attend a city or county council meeting, or help register others to vote.

Dial 211 to get help or get involved or visit www.win211.org.