

People in your life

READING Friends for life – the health benefits of friendship

Read the text about the health benefits of having friends, then choose the correct answer (A, B, C, or D) for questions 1–7. Put a cross (☒) in the correct box. The first one (0) has been done for you.

The health benefits of friendship

Our medical correspondent, Joe Goodwin, met psychologist Dr Helen Mitchell to find out what science has to say about the link between friends and health.

Joe: It sounds too good to be true, Helen, but recent scientific research really points to a link between having friends and leading a healthy life?

Helen: That's correct, Joe. According to studies carried out with people of all age groups, a clear connection has been shown between having a wide circle of friends and good health.

Joe: Are we just talking about psychological health here? The advantages of having someone to talk to?

Helen: Not at all. Medical research has shown that having a wide circle of friends does indeed promote good health, both mental and physical.

Joe: So you're saying that our friends don't just stop us feeling lonely?

Helen: Exactly. It seems, for example, that people with strong friendship bonds have better survival rates following a heart attack. In fact, people with a wide circle of friends tend to live longer in general.

Joe: That's amazing! We all know that friends help to cheer us up when we're having a bad day or give us an honest opinion when we're buying new clothes, but who would have guessed that they keep us healthy too?

Helen: Well, they do that as well, of course, but having friends can help boost your immune system and reduce your stress levels – something that's especially important nowadays when our lives are so hectic and fast-paced.

Joe: But don't you agree that, even if we value their opinion, sometimes friends may say things we don't especially want to hear?



Helen: That's true. They may be brutally honest, and that's not always easy to accept, but there are advantages to this too. They may be able to talk you out of bad habits and ultimately influence your long-term health for the better.

Joe: Can you elaborate?

Helen: Your friends may try to talk you out of behaviour which damages your health such as drinking too much or smoking and, in the end, if you listen to them, you could be saving yourself from ill health in the future.

Joe: Are there any other advantages to having friends?

Helen: Yes, your friends' opinions and experiences may be different to yours, so listening to them can give you a different perspective on life. They can inspire you and help you to know yourself better. In the long run, this can help you make better choices and decisions about your own future.

Joe: Well, that seems logical. Is there anything else we should bear in mind?

Helen: Of course, like most things in life, friendship is a matter of give and take, so I would say it's as important to *be* a loyal and supportive friend as it is to *have* one.

Joe: Thanks, Helen, this was most informative!

- 0 Science has shown that
- A young people benefit most from having friends.
 - B older members of society are more likely to stay healthier with friends.
 - C having friends can help people of any age stay healthy.
 - D there is no connection between having friends and good health.
- 1 Strong friendship connections
- A can have a positive effect on both mental and physical health.
 - B can primarily help you keep a healthy mind.
 - C can have the best benefits for physical fitness.
 - D most importantly, can stop us from feeling lonely.
- 2 According to Dr Mitchell, people who have suffered a heart attack
- A always need friends to support their physical recovery.
 - B have a better chance of surviving if they are physically fit.
 - C can only recover if they have someone to cheer them up.
 - D have a better chance of surviving if they have friends.
- 3 People with a wide circle of friends
- A feel stressed because their friends are often hectic.
 - B have increased stress levels and decreased immune systems.
 - C have decreased stress levels and increased immune systems.
 - D live a more fast-paced lifestyle.
- 4 With regard to your health, in the long term friends may
- A persuade you to behave more responsibly.
 - B tell you what you want to hear.
 - C learn to respect your right to make your own decisions.
 - D make you adopt bad habits.
- 5 Adopting healthier habits
- A can result in your friends being healthier too.
 - B may keep your friends happier in the long term.
 - C can give you better long-term health prospects.
 - D makes it easier to spend quality time with your friends.
- 6 An additional advantage of having friends is
- A they can help you change your outlook on life.
 - B they will not influence your decision-making.
 - C they will be good listeners.
 - D they can make decisions about your future.
- 7 Don't forget that
- A there's nothing more important in a friendship than loyalty.
 - B friendship is based on mutual support.
 - C your friends will expect you to look after them.
 - D you can always expect to have friends.

Answer key

READING Friends for life – the health benefits of friendship

1 A, 2 D, 3 C, 4 A, 5 C, 6 A, 7 B