



# Loneliness hurts

How the immune system takes a beating when you are on your own

**DON'T TAKE LONELINESS** lightly - it could harm your immune system and health, says a new study.

Loneliness spurs production of proteins signalling the presence of inflammation, linked to coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, arthritis and Alzheimer's disease, as well as the frailty and functional decline that can accompany aging, say researchers.

"It is clear from previous research that poor-quality relationships are linked to a number of health problems, including premature mortality and all sorts of other very serious health conditions," says Lisa Jaremka, postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Behavioural Medicine Research at the Ohio State University, who led the research.

"One reason this type of

research is important is to understand how loneliness and relationships broadly affect health. The more we understand about the process, the more potential there is to counter those negative effects - to perhaps intervene," adds Jaremka, according to an Ohio statement.

The results are based on a series of studies conducted with two populations: a healthy group of overweight middle-aged adults and a group of breast cancer survivors.

The researchers measured loneliness in all studies using the University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale, a questionnaire that assesses perceptions of social isolation and loneliness.

Jaremka presented the research at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual meeting in New Orleans. *IANS*



## Get some shut-eye

Good sleep fosters well being, gratitude

**A GOOD NIGHT'S** sleep fosters general health and well-being but now a new study highlights a more surprising outcome - greater feelings of gratitude.

Social psychologists are finding that "prosocial" behaviour, expressing gratitude and giving to others, is key to our psychological well-being. Even how we choose to spend our money on purchases affects our health and happiness.

"A plethora of research highlights the importance of getting a good night's sleep for physical and psychological well-being, yet in our society, people still seem to take pride in needing and getting, little sleep," says study co-author Amie Gordon of the University of California - Berkeley, US.

"And in the past, research has shown that gratitude pro-



motes good sleep, but our research looks at the link in the other direction and, to our knowledge, is the first to show that everyday experiences of poor sleep are negatively associated with gratitude toward others - an important emotion that helps form and maintain close social bonds," adds Gordon.

In three new studies, Gordon and Serena Chen, also of University of California - Berkeley, explored how poor sleep affects people's feelings of gratitude, according to an UC-B statement.

In the first study, people who experienced a poor night's sleep were less grateful after listing five things in life for which they were appreciative than were people who had slept well the night before.

In the second study, participants recorded their sleep from the previous night for two weeks and their feelings of gratitude. The researchers found a decline in gratitude linked with poor sleep, and those participants reported feeling more self-ish those days.

The final study looked at heterosexual couples and found that people tend to feel less grateful toward their romantic partners if either they or their partners generally sleep poorly.

"In line with this finding, people reported feeling less appreciated by their partners if they or their partner tends to sleep poorly, suggesting that the lack of gratitude is transmitted to the partner," Gordon says.

Just as expressing gratitude confers benefits, so too does giving to others. New research shows that people all around the world, from Canada to Uganda, from South Africa to India derive more happiness from spending money on others than they do on themselves. *IANS*

## ALIGN YOUR LIFE

### Office Feng Shui

**IT'S REALLY NOT** surprising that a business personality like Donald Trump or major corporations like Sony, British Airways and Disney follow the principles of Feng Shui in their offices and buildings. The ancient Chinese science of Feng Shui has 5,000 years of history in increasing prosperity and improving health and relationships for those who used it correctly. Feng Shui is nothing but balancing and enhancing the five elements in your immediate surroundings. Once these elements have been balanced, energy flow is smooth and uninterrupted leading to good office Feng Shui.

The idea is to create a balanced and harmonious working environment to suit all employees and enhance productivity. To begin with, de-clutter your office. When your office is cluttered, so is your mind. Clutter slows down energy movement, leads to stagnation. Go through the pile of paperwork on your desk. Keep what is needed and file away the rest. Organise your desk; surround yourself with positive things such as professional achievements and family photographs. Arrange your desk in such a way that you get wall support. The wall provides solid support, so you can relax and be more productive. If your back is towards a window, keep the window closed at all times to avoid being hit by excessive energy on your back.

If you have restrooms opposite your office, avoid looking into them. Remove any dead plants from your surroundings. They hamper the good energy flow. Sharp corners, caused by oddly shaped rooms, pointed directly at your chair or office create harsh energy. Prolonged exposure to these corners might lead to migraines and stress. If there is no escaping such corners, place a tall plant between you and sharp corner to neutralise energy flow. Avoid exposed beams above your chair, which make you feel uncomfortable and trigger various health problems after prolonged exposure.

Last but not least find out your good facing direction from your date of birth and place your desk to access that direction. By doing so, you will be tapping into good energy and feel more balanced. Once the office energies have been balanced, ensure you clear your desk on a weekly basis. Don't let clutter accumulate and keep your immediate space open and airy. Make small changes in your office to eliminate stress and create a perfect working environment for yourself.

**Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Institute which offers effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall well-being. [align@shivaniadalja.com](mailto:align@shivaniadalja.com)**

