

## Loneliness, a killer that threatens obesity

ANI, Feb 2, 2011, 12.13pm IST

*Loneliness can affect all age groups but can be particularly harmful to the elderly, according to British campaigners*

A group of charities has warned that loneliness is a 'hidden killer' among older people that poses as great a health risk as obesity or smoking.

While people are aware of the emotional problems of loneliness, they said few recognised the physical damage.

The 'Campaign To End Loneliness' found that more than half of those over the age of 75 live alone and almost one in 10 elderly people suffers from 'intense' loneliness, reports the *Daily Mail*.

The campaigners warned that lonely older people are often at increased risk of depression, lack of exercise and poor eating habits.

They claimed that greater recognition was needed among health professionals of the links between poor health and loneliness.

The initiative was organised by Age UK Oxfordshire, Counsel and Care, Independent Age and WRVS and funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

In a report, the campaigners called for better awareness of the 'horror' of loneliness and its 'pernicious impact' on older people.

According to a poll of 2,200, fewer than one in five has ever seen or heard information about loneliness as a health risk.

The World Health Organisation has rated loneliness as a higher risk to health than smoking and as great a risk as obesity.