



Marriage Promotes Health

Issue: Marriage promotes health and well-being among married couples¹, as well as among their children.

Illnesses

- Compared to married individuals, the risk of mortality is 58 percent higher for never-married individuals and 27 percent for divorced/ separated individuals.²
- Married persons are less likely to become severely ill than the divorced.³ Divorced people have 20 percent more chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or cancer than married people.⁴
- Married people are least likely to have mental disorders,⁵ and have higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being than those who are single, divorced, or cohabiting.⁶

Men versus Women

- For both men and women, marriage is associated with a significant reduction in depression.⁷
- Married men have lower levels of stress hormones,⁸ are three times less likely to die from cardiovascular disease, and live longer after being diagnosed with cancer.⁹
- Married women have a 60 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease [than divorced women],¹⁰ experience less psychological distress,¹¹ and have lower breast-cancer morbidity.¹²
- The diverse health benefits for married couples do not extend to cohabiting couples.¹³

Lifestyle

- Married men and women have better access to private health insurance, have lower healthcare costs, and are treated in higher-quality hospitals.¹⁴
- Married individuals smoke and binge drink less frequently than cohabiters.¹⁵

Children's Health

- An eight-decade study concluded that "parental divorce during childhood was the single strongest social predictor of early death." On average, these children died 5 years earlier and were more adversely impacted than those children who experienced a parent's death.¹⁶
- Children who experience parental divorce or separation are more likely to have health problems.¹⁷

Conclusion: The intact, married family naturally delivers fundamental health benefits to all of its members. MARRI research available online¹⁸ shows that promoting marriage is an indispensable component of effective healthcare reform in America.

¹ “Married two-parent families,” “married-couple families,” and similar terms within this document all refer to families in which there is a married mother and father present. Note, according to the US Census Bureau, “Family households and married-couple families do not include same-sex married couples even if the marriage was performed in a state issuing marriage certificates for same-sex couples.”

² Robert M. Kaplan and Richard G. Kronick, “Marital Status and Longevity in the U.S. Population,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 60, No. 9, (September 2006): 760-765. Accessed 5 August 2014.

³ Glenn T. Stanton, “Why Marriage Matters.” Available at <http://www.ampartnership.org/resourcecenter/news/89-why-marriage-matters.html>. Accessed 27 July 2011.

⁴ ME Hughes and LJ Waite, “Marital Biography and Health at Mid-Life,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 50, No. 3 (2009): 344-58.

⁵ David Williams, et al., “Marital Status and Psychiatric Disorders Among Blacks and Whites,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 33 (1992): 140-157. As cited in Glenn T. Stanton, “Why Marriage Matters.” Available at <http://www.ampartnership.org/resourcecenter/news/89-why-marriage-matters.html>. Accessed 27 July 2011.

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⁶ Susan L. Brown, “Relationship Quality Dynamics of Cohabiting Unions,” *Journal of Family Issues* 24, no. 5 (2003): 583-601; Susan L. Brown, “The Effect of Union Type on Psychological Well-being: Depression among Cohabitators versus Marrieds,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 41, no. 3 (2000): 241-255; J.K. Kiecolt-Glaser and T.L. Newton, “Marriage and Health: His and Hers,” *Psychological Bulletin* 127, no. 4 (2001): 472-503; Lee A. Lillard and Constantijn W.A. Panis, “Marital Status and Mortality: The Role of Health,” *Demography* 33, no. 3 (1996): 313-327; Lee A. Lillard and Linda J. Waite, “Til Death Do us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 5 (1995): 1131-1156; Kristen Marcussen, “Explaining Differences in Mental Health Between Married and Cohabiting Individuals,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (1999): 239-257; Steven Stack and J. Ross Eshleman, “Marital Status and Happiness: A 17-Nation Study,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60 (1998): 527-536; K.A.S. Wickrama, et al., “Marital Quality and Physical Illness: A Latent Growth Curve Analysis,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59, no. 1 (1997): 143-155. All as cited in Daniel Lees, “The Psychological Benefits of Marriage,” *Research Note* (April 2007): 1-4. Available at http://www.maxim.org.nz/files/pdf/psychological_benefits_of_marriage.pdf. Accessed 27 July 2011

⁷ Kathleen A. Lamb, Gary R. Lee, and Alfred DeMaris, “Union Formation and Depression: Selection and Relationship Effects,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65, No. 4 (November 2003): 953- 962. Accessed 5 August 2014.

⁸ Dario Maestripieri, “Between- and within-sex variation in hormonal responses to psychological stress in a large sample of college students,” *Stress* 13, no. 5 (2010): 413-442; Julianne Holt-Lunstad, “Is There Something Unique about Marriage? The Relative Impact of Marital Status, Relationship Quality, and Network Social Support on Ambulatory Blood Pressure and Mental Health,” *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 35, no. 2 (2008): 239-244. As cited in Kathleen Blanchard, “Health & Marriage: Benefits for Men.” Available at <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2010/10/13/health-marriage-benefits-men/#ixzz1TDmcdmCc>. Accessed 26 July 2011.

⁹ Harvard Health Publications, “Marriage and Men’s Health,” *Harvard Men’s Health Watch*, July 2010. Available at http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Harvard_Mens_Health_Watch/2010/July/marriage-and-mens-health

¹⁰ Zhang, Zhenmei, and Mark D. Hayward. “Gender, the Marital Life Course, and Cardiovascular Health in Late Midlife.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 68, no. 3, 2006, pp. 639-657.

¹¹ Duncan Cramer, “Living Alone, Marital Status, Gender and Health,” *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 3 (1993): 9.

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¹² Cynthia Osborne, et al., “The Influence of Marital Status on the Stage at Diagnosis, Treatment, and Survival of Older Women with Breast Cancer,” *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment* 93 (2005): 43-44.

¹³ Hyoun K. Kim and Patrick C. McKenry, “The Relationship Between Marriage and Psychological Well-Being: A Longitudinal Analysis,” *Journal of Family Issues* 23 (2002), 905.

¹⁴ R.G. Wood, B. Goesling, and S. Avellar, “The Effects of Marriage on Health: Synthesis of Current Research Evidence,” Contract # 233-02-0086. Washington, D.C.: ASPE, HHS (2007). Available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/marriageonhealth/index.htm>. As cited in National Healthy Marriage Resource Center Research Brief by Jana Staton, “Making the Connection Between Healthy Marriage and Health Outcomes: What the Research Says” (2009): 1-18. Available at <http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/resource-detail/index.aspx?rid=3649>. Accessed 8 September 2011.

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¹⁵ Theodore D. Fuller, “Relationship Status, Health, and Health Behavior: An Examination of Cohabiters and Commuters,” *Sociological Perspectives* 53, no. 2 (2010): 236.

¹⁶ Howard Friedman. *The Longevity Project: Surprising Discoveries for Health and Long Life from the Landmark Eight Decade Study*. Hay House, Inc, 2011.

¹⁷ Paul R. Amato and Bruce Keith, “Parental Divorce and Adult Well-being: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1991): 49, 54.

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¹⁸ www.marri.us For example, “164 Reasons to Marry”