Health Benefits of Marriage

Marriage offers social support

- Marriage may protect against the well-documented risks associated with social isolation.


- Higher levels of social integration and support have been linked with many health benefits including protection against cardiovascular disease. Marriage is a primary source of support for many adults.


- Across a number of surveys, married individuals report greater happiness and life satisfaction and have a lower risk of depression than their unmarried counterparts.


Marriage is better than cohabiting

- What are the processes by which marriage promotes health and well-being? Several explanations have been proposed, including cohabitation, economic well-being, and social support. Research supports the two latter explanations, as unmarried adults living together are more likely to report poorer health than married adults, and are as likely to report as much distress as adults living alone.

Marriage promotes health

- Across all causes of death and across different unmarried populations (never married, divorced/ separated, and widowed), unmarried individuals had elevated rates of death compared to married individuals.


- The relationship between marital status and mortality exhibits consistent pattern in long-term studies, with marital status affording greater protection from mortality for men compared to women (50% higher among women, 250% higher among men.


- Positive spousal influence and involvement may encourage healthy behaviors and discourage unhealthy behaviors.


- Although, married persons have higher median household incomes than the unmarried (US$54,300 vs. US$23,400), after controlling for income, married persons still have lower rates of mortality than unmarried persons


- Married persons, particularly women, may be at a health advantage relative to their unmarried counterparts, through the increased availability of socioeconomic resources. However, some research suggests that women may be more sensitive to negative aspects of relationships than men.

Marriage prevents unplanned pregnancy

Contraceptive Failure for Young Adults by Marital Status and Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 20-24 (low income)</th>
<th>Pill</th>
<th>Condom</th>
<th>Implant</th>
<th>Injectable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 20-24 (high income)</th>
<th>Pill</th>
<th>Condom</th>
<th>Spermicide</th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Married couples are much less likely to experience a contraceptive failure than dating or cohabiting couples, even after adjusting for age and method of contraception.
- Overall annual contraceptive failure rates are 9.9% for married couples, 14.1% for unmarried couples, and 21.9% for cohabiting couples.


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