

# Why Homelessness Affects Health

## *Why are we concerned about homelessness?*

People who have lost their homes tend to live about 25 years less than the general population. They tend to have more physical, mental and respiratory problems. They may also have increased substance abuse issues as well as less access to medication and treatment options. With the current pandemic crisis, living conditions and poor health places the homeless community at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 and spreading it to others in the community.



## *Who does homelessness affect?*

Homelessness affects over a half million people in the U.S. In Virginia, over five thousand people are living without a permanent dwelling including men, women, families, unaccompanied young adults, seniors, veterans, and people living with disabilities. About 20% of people without housing have a mental illness or chronic health condition. Most people are not homeless for long, but there is a small percent who are considered chronically homeless (people living in an uninhabitable place or in a shelter for at least one year).

## *How does homelessness affect health?*

Homelessness creates new health problems and existing ones may get worse. Homeless people have an increased risk of health issues due to mental health/stress issues, chronic health conditions, substance abuse, access to healthy foods, and limited access to bathrooms and showers. The lack of stable housing, health care, medication, treatment options, showers, bathrooms, finances, and food can lead to stress, serious skin conditions, poor dental care, other physical and mental health issues and increased recovery times from illnesses.

**For more information:** [www.tjach.org](http://www.tjach.org)



12/20



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