

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH AND RELIGION

*A double minded man (is) unstable in all his ways.*  
—James 1:8

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Numerous medical journal studies have documented the relationship between faith, prayer and their effect on health. Prayer and faith have been found to speed up heart patient's recovery, improve immune function, lower blood pressure, aid in addiction recovery, and extend life spans.

In fact there is so much scientific data supporting the benefits of faith that it should be malpractice for a doctor not to promote that their patients become involved in their faith and pray regularly. The most phenomenal part is, this extremely cost-effective health promoting action is free. It makes one wonder why you wouldn't want to take advantage of it.

## HEALTH CARE AND RELIGION IS ONE OF THE MOST TALKED ABOUT TOPICS.

The evidence continues to escalate showing that people who are actively involved in their faith are emotionally, physically, and psychologically healthier. Religious people have been found to have markedly lower rates of divorce. Certain illnesses and diseases are statistically higher in divorced individuals. Divorced individuals suffer higher rates of depression, stress and even some physical maladies than nondivorced individuals. For example divorced males suffer a significantly higher rate of cancers than married men.

Researchers are amazed at the far-reaching benefits of a strong faith. Surveys of the US population over the past 60 years have shown that religion plays an important role in the majority of Americans; 95% of Americans believe in God, more than 50% pray daily, and more than 40% attend church weekly. Published studies have shown that more than three-fourths of Americans want their physicians to consider spiritual issues in their care and almost half want their physicians to pray with them.

## HOW DOES FAITH PROMOTE AND AID HEALTH?

It may be that individuals with a strong faith may be better adapted to cope with disease and illness by relying on their beliefs. It would appear that by encouraging individuals to pray and meditate more, attend worship services, follow faith-based mourning practices, seeking forgiveness from others and reading their Bibles, patients are given a powerful resource for improved prevention, coping and recovery from disease. It may be that religious people who experience a health crisis or a stressful situation are better able to maintain a sense of meaning and hope for their lives.

## CONSISTENCY OF BELIEFS AND ACTIONS IS IMPORTANT.

Secular researchers frequently accuse people of faith as being "weak-kneed" and "confused." There is a small grain of truth in that commentary. It has been found that people who believe in Christianity but don't practice it experience

higher levels of stress. Studies have indicated that people who merely sit at home and watch religious broadcasts and television evangelists without getting physically involved are actually worse off. What was found was: The inconsistent Christian suffers greater stress than the consistent atheist. Individuals who are actively involved and practicing their religion enjoy better emotional, mental, and physical health.