



PRESS RELEASE

Eugene Family YMCA Launches New Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program *More than 26 percent of people in Lane County have high blood pressure*

Eugene, Ore., February 22, 2022 —

In March, the Eugene Family YMCA will launch a brand new health initiative to combat Lane County's high rates of hypertension, a leading cause of stroke and heart attacks.

The YMCA's Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program is designed to help participants with hypertension lower their blood pressure by following an evidence-based program that combines blood pressure self-monitoring, nutrition education seminars and personalized support.

"The Y is proud to launch the Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring program," said Kim Miller, the Y's Health & Wellness Director. "This program is yet another example of our work to improve health outcomes in our community. The blood pressure program complements an array of offerings that includes diabetes prevention, cancer survivorship, arthritis management and adaptive fitness. The Y is the leading community-based organization dedicated to improving the nation's health and this program is a great example of putting that commitment into action."

The Y developed this program to help individuals better manage hypertension and improve their overall health. According to the American Heart Association, more than 80 million Americans have high blood pressure, but less than half have it under control. More than 26 percent of Lane County residents have hypertension, according to the county's [2019 Community Health Status Assessment](#).

When Dr. Paula Ciesielski's patients had an elevated blood pressure reading, she knew she needed more information.

"There are no symptoms of high blood pressure and yet it is a serious condition over time," said Ciesielski, who retired in 2017. "I needed to know my patients' typical blood pressure reading to know if exercise, diet and nutrition was the appropriate intervention or if I needed to prescribe medication."

She instructed her patients to visit a local pharmacy or use an outpatient blood pressure machine to keep track for a week or so. Even then, the data set was limited.

"It is better to do home monitoring over a period of time," said Ciesielski, who also serves on the Eugene Y's Board of Directors. "Alcohol, salt intake and intense exercise can all affect blood pressure."

Research shows that the simple process of checking and recording blood pressure at least twice a month over four months may lower blood pressure in some people with hypertension. In addition, evidence shows that proper nutrition, particularly with a reduction in sodium intake, may help reduce both systolic and diastolic blood pressures.

As part of the Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring program, participants will measure their blood pressure at least two times a month for four consecutive months—a minimum of eight times—

and record their blood pressure readings in a self-selected tracking tool. A nutrition education component will encourage participants to practice healthier eating habits, including reducing sodium in their diet.

The program is facilitated by Healthy Heart Ambassadors, appointed and trained by the Y, who will show participants how to use a blood pressure monitor, encourage self-monitoring and facilitate monthly nutrition education seminars.

In partnership with Cornerstone Community Housing, the Y will offer weekly time slots for participants to go through training, get their blood pressure checked and ask questions. "Providing space for the Y's Healthy Heart Ambassadors to educate community members about hypertension fits our holistic approach to empowering families to experience their best lives," said Darcy Phillips, Executive Director of Cornerstone Community Housing. "Not only do we provide quality, affordable housing for people on limited incomes, we offer services that promote health, personal growth and economic independence. Tackling high blood pressure is a key way to ensure our community members eat healthy, exercise and take ownership of their own health."

The Eugene Y is looking for adults with high blood pressure who could benefit from participating in this program. Benefits include:

- A simple, evidence-based program that may lower blood pressure
- Personalized support from a Y Healthy Heart Ambassador
- Tips for maintaining cardiovascular health
- Easy-to-use, portable self-tracking tool
- Heart healthy nutrition education seminars

Participants must meet the following criteria to participate in the program:

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must be diagnosed with high blood pressure
- Must not have experienced a recent cardiac event
- Must not have atrial fibrillation or other arrhythmias
- Must not be at risk for lymphedema

"So many people struggle with high blood pressure," said Eugene Y CEO Brian Steffen. "We are thrilled to help them understand their typical blood pressure levels, what triggers their high blood pressure and how to make nutritional changes with support from knowledgeable, friendly staff and their doctor. This is a health arena ripe for improvement and the Y is uniquely qualified for this role."

- **What:** Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program
- **When:** 4-month program, rolling start
- **Where:** Initial appointment (10-15 minutes) and check-ins at any of the following locations:
 - The Eugene Family YMCA, 2055 Patterson Street, Eugene
 - Cornerstone Community Housing
 - West Town (265 West 8th Avenue, Eugene)
 - Willakenzie Crossing (3057 Willakenzie Road, Eugene)
 - Homes for Good's Market District Commons (560 Oak Street, Eugene)
- **How:** Email bpsm@eugeneymca.org
- **Cost:** \$20 a month for Y members/ \$25 for Community Members for the 4-month program, \$35 for a blood pressure monitor
- **For more information,** contact Kim Miller at kimberly@eugeneymca.org or visit the Webpage [HERE](#).

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Media inquires, please contact:
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About the Eugene Family YMCA

The Eugene Family YMCA is one of the region's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Each year across Lane County, the Y engages more than 18,000 people regardless of age, gender, income or background—to nurture the potential of children, teens and seniors; improve health and well-being; and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. In 2020, the Eugene Family YMCA awarded \$413,506 in financial assistance. The YMCA has been serving the Eugene-area since 1887.

About Cornerstone Community Housing

Since 1992 Cornerstone Community Housing has been committed to building quality, affordable housing for people living on limited incomes while offering services that promote opportunities for personal growth and economic independence.

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