

U.C.C. WELLNESS MINISTRIES TOOLKIT
Section 3

EXEMPLARS OF WELLNESS MINISTRIES ACTIVITIES

Physical Health and Wellness

Title: *Blood Pressure Connections*

Age groups served: Adults

Reason for development and implementation:

[High blood pressure](#), also labeled hypertension, affects nearly half of the adult population in the United States. Because there are usually no warning signs or symptoms, a person may have high blood pressure and not realize it. The only way to know that high blood pressure is occurring is to have it checked. That is why it is included as part of most physical examinations.

Some people experience a higher blood pressure reading when taken in a clinical setting, although they don't experience it when measured in other locations. This phenomenon sometimes called "white coat hypertension" is believed to be due to anxiety experienced during a clinic visit.

Some Wellness Ministries provide blood pressure screenings as part of their support for healthy living. A licensed health professional offers blood pressure checks at a location within the church facility where a person may feel relaxed. All readings are recorded with the date, time, place, arm used, and the name of the professional performing the screening. The person keeps this card that documents the blood pressure readings so they may share the information with their health care providers.

Sharing the story: Teaching and advocating regarding hypertension

Knowing that many adults experience elevated blood pressure, the Wellness Ministries Team decided to offer blood pressure screening after worship on each month's second and fourth Sundays. Two registered nurses who were congregation members chose the Sunday each would be available. The sessions were held in a room located near Coffee Hour that was easily accessible, relatively quiet, and had a comfortable chair. Adult-size blood pressure cuffs in two different sizes were purchased and kept at the church. Alcohol wipes to wipe the chest piece of the provider's stethoscope and hand sanitizer were purchased.

Each individual was given a folded, wallet-size card to take to medical appointments that checked their blood pressure. The front of the folded card had their name and a brief explanation about why to track blood pressure measurements. Inside the card were columns for the information: date, time, cuff size used, blood pressure

reading, heart rate, space for a short note, and the name and credentials of the provider.

The information relative to each attendee was also entered on the Blood Pressure Log for that session and secured in the Wellness Ministries Team locked file. (Examples of logs are available with an internet search.) When a person had what was considered an abnormal reading for them, they were asked to contact their primary healthcare provider and share the information. The Wellness Minister followed up with the person and supported them as needed with their healthcare providers.

Evaluation:

- Many healthcare providers expressed appreciation to their patients for having their blood pressure checked outside of the office and then bringing those readings with them. They also appreciated that their patient was supported in coming in for an appointment when a possible problem was identified.
- The participants expressed appreciation that they could now actively monitor their blood pressure, which most could not accomplish alone.
- There also seemed to be other benefits. For example, several people that lived alone requested blood pressure checks on every occasion even though they had a history of readings falling in the expected range. Perhaps they sought the screening because an encounter offered the opportunity for eye-to-eye contact and human touch while the activity was performed.
- Because the blood pressure process was not rushed and there was a degree of privacy, people often shared other health concerns or requested assistance unrelated to their blood pressure. These issues were heard, noted, and followed up on by the Wellness Minister.

Next steps:

- Solicit feedback from those doing the blood pressure screenings and evaluate whether the number of opportunities per month and times is suitable.
- Every few months, review the location, process, and success of follow-up to note issues or concerns and the security of the data collected.
- Identify any common needs mentioned during these blood pressure contacts and consider how to address them.
- Offer information and activities that reduce the risk of hypertension, such as preparing healthy dietary choices and possible ways to increase physical exercise.

Resources:

Educational materials are available from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [About High Blood Pressure](#) provides communication kits, handouts, posters, fact sheets, and links to other resources for a variety of supportive programs.