

Why Checking Your Blood Pressure Matters More Than You Think

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Most of us don't think about our blood pressure until a doctor mentions it—but waiting can be risky. High blood pressure is often called a “silent” condition for a reason—you can have it without feeling any symptoms. Yet it remains one of the top risk factors for heart attack and stroke.

In Kansas, 34.3% of adults—about 750,000 people—have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, enough to fill Arrowhead Stadium nearly ten times. It's a reminder of just how common this condition is and why keeping an eye on your numbers is so important.

The first step in understanding your blood pressure is simple: check it regularly. Accurate, consistent readings help you notice patterns and spot changes early. This information also helps you have more informed conversations with your healthcare provider and take action before small issues grow into serious health problems.

Recognizing the need for easier access to blood pressure monitoring, five local libraries have joined together to launch the **Libraries with Heart** initiative. This program aims to make blood pressure checks and related education more accessible to everyone in the community.

Program Highlights

- **Blood Pressure Monitors for Checkout:** Patrons can borrow validated monitors through each library's Library of Things catalog.
- **Easy-to-Understand Educational Materials:** Resources help users learn how to take readings, understand their results, and take steps toward better heart health.
- **Connections to Local Healthcare Providers:** Additional support and follow-up care are available through local partners.

The **Libraries with Heart** initiative is supported by a Basic Human Needs grant from the Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas, in partnership with K-State Extension, the American Heart Association, and participating libraries.

Heart-Healthy Habits to Start Today

- **Check Your Blood Pressure Regularly**
- **Eat Smart:** Choose herbs and spices instead of salt.
- **Move More:** Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity daily.
- **Sleep Well:** Get 7–9 hours each night to support heart recovery.
- **Manage Stress:** Try deep breathing, stretching, or a short walk.
- **Avoid Tobacco:** Your heart begins to heal within weeks of quitting.

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