



UPBEAT
Mended Hearts Newsletter
Chapter # 130 – July 2026
Olympia, WA

**It's Great
To Be Alive
And
To Help**

Meeting Notice

Program: Walk with a Doc by Rachel Ballou

Date/Time: Thursday, July 9, 2pm

**Location: MyMedSupplies
6149 Martin Way East
Lacey, WA**

Upcoming Dates

July 2-Board Meeting

July 9-Chapter Meeting

Aug 13-Chapter Picnic

Happy Fourth of July!!

President's Message
Michael Blonden

This month, I want to emphasize how fortunate we are to have access to several Providence Health and Services Heart Resources in our area. Providence not only supports our Chapter but also contributes to community initiatives such as Walk with a Doc. Dr. David Sabgir, a cardiologist and founder of Walk with a Doc, reminds us that healing goes beyond exam rooms and prescriptions—it occurs when people come together, share openly, and offer mutual support.

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Rachel Ballou, our local Walk with a Doc leader, as the speaker for our July Member Meeting. I encourage everyone to attend her presentation. Cardiac Rehab is another valuable resource many of you have benefited from, and its effectiveness relies on our participation. Additionally, the Providence Heart Failure Clinic and informative podcasts listed on our website offer further support.

For those interested in joining from home, Basecamp Prevention and Wellness, based at Providence Portland with support from Nike, provides a great option. There are many opportunities for us to take advantage of these resources.

As heart disease remains the leading cause of death worldwide for both women and men—and with 80% being preventable through lifestyle changes—let's take that first small step together. Remember, "The longest journey starts with a single step."

Looking ahead, our August Member Meeting will be a picnic at Tumwater Historical Park. We hope you'll join us for this social gathering. Finally, thank you to Jane, Rick, Margie, and Jim for volunteering as visitors at St. Peter Hospital. Your efforts will help us reach and support hundreds of additional heart patients.

Walk with a Doc

Dr. Rachel Ballou

Member Meeting-July 9, 2026 at 2 pm
MyMedSupplies-6149 Martin Way E, Lacey, WA 98516



Dr. Ballou is a Thurston county native who grew up in Yelm and Rainier. She completed her undergraduate studies in Washington state and attended medical school in North Carolina.

Returning to the PNW for residency, she attended Providence St. Peter Family Medicine residency program. She is board certified in Family Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine, and she is the Medical Director of Quality of Providence Southwest Washington. She enjoys working with patients of a variety of ages and backgrounds and providing care for the mind and body.

In her free time, you can find her out in the woods observing birds and mushrooms, dancing in her kitchen, or working on her novel while listening to music. She is an active member of South Sound Mushroom Club and is the Thurston County Walk with a Doc Chapter Leader

Welcome New Members

Jim Elsner
Patricia Havens
Thomas Kincaid
Diane March
Randall Mawdsley
Andrew Rayment
Marie Swanson
Ken Trout
Kermit Willcut
Raymond Wilson
Gloria Woskow



Why is Balance Exercise Important?

Ann Monaghan, Health Officer

Did you know that falls are the leading cause of injury among American's over 50? More than 25% of people over 50 fall every year, resulting in 3 million emergency room visits and 800,000 hospitalizations. These injuries leave many with financial burdens and have devastating impacts on their physical and emotional well-being. Prevention programs, such as balance training, can help lessen the threat of falling. If you're over 50, or even approaching it, now is a great time to empower yourself.

While you may believe your risk of falling at age 50 is low, a study finds it's actually the time your balance may start to decline. More specifically, without prevention measures, midlife is when your ability to stand on one foot begins to diminish. People in their 30s and 40s are generally able to stand on one foot at least one minute. That time drops to 45 seconds at age 50; 28 seconds at 70; and 12 seconds at 80, showing gradual decline. If you suffer from problems with sleep, you also increase your risk of falling. Another factor affecting your balance is loss of muscle mass that occurs with age. While strength training can combat this and has positive effects on balance, you may want to start by focusing on balance if you are new to exercise.

Let's get started

Before you start, remember, some factors outside of age affect balance. These include inner ear issues, nerve damage, neurological conditions, or medications. In these cases, and others, it's important to speak with your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Your physician may offer guidance on the best balance exercises for your condition. If you prefer to perform balance exercises in the comfort of your own home, you can start with:

Standing on one foot

Place your hand on a tabletop or the back of a heavy chair. Standing tall, bend one knee to lift one foot back into the air. Hold for 10 seconds, if you feel steady on your planted foot. Then switch to the other foot. Repeat each foot 10-15 times.

Tapping your foot

Find a foot stool or set of chairs. You may also want to have a chair or tabletop nearby to hold onto for balance. With your shoulders back, tap one foot onto the step and then move it back to position. Repeat this movement, tapping the same foot, 15-20 times.

Walking heel to toe

Be near a wall or back of couch to steady yourself, if needed. With your shoulders back and core tight, place the heel of one foot in front of the other foot. Continue this until you reach the end of the wall or couch, repeat.

Once you feel comfortable doing these balance exercises, you can increase the number of repetitions and begin to search in the community for classes or online for other balancing exercises to add to your routine.

What are the best balance exercises?

Balance exercises can help you stay upright and maintain mobility. Because most balance exercises are low impact, you can do them as many days per week as you want. The more you practice the better your balance will become. The best exercises are those that target the parts of your body that help you stay balanced from your core down. Examples of balance training exercises are:

Tai Chi

Originally an ancient Chinese martial art, Tai Chi is a gentle practice focused on movement and proven to strengthen your upper and lower body. Balance exercises can be done in a group/class setting if you enjoy the socialization. If you are interested in classes, check out Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Center or Chinese Healing and Movement Arts Center in Olympia. If you want to do Tai Chi at home, I recommend that you visit providencebasecamp.org. Tai Chi classes are taught live, in virtual classrooms. The virtual classes are free.

Water Aerobics

Aquatic exercises or water aerobics, can strengthen muscles in your core and increase flexibility while also improving balance. Water provides a safe and supportive space to do so. YMCAs offer water exercise classes.

Yoga

Like other types of classes, yoga can benefit you in multiple ways-strengthening muscles in your core and legs while enhancing your balance and flexibility. Some yoga classes incorporate the use of chairs for stability and peace of mind as you get started. If you are unable to get to class, no need to worry. Several YouTube channels and providencebasecamp.org are devoted to yoga workouts.



Mended Hearts Chapter Picnic

DATE: Thursday, August 13

TIME: 5 - 7:00PM

LOCATION: TUMWATER HISTORICAL PARK, 777 Simmons Rd. SW

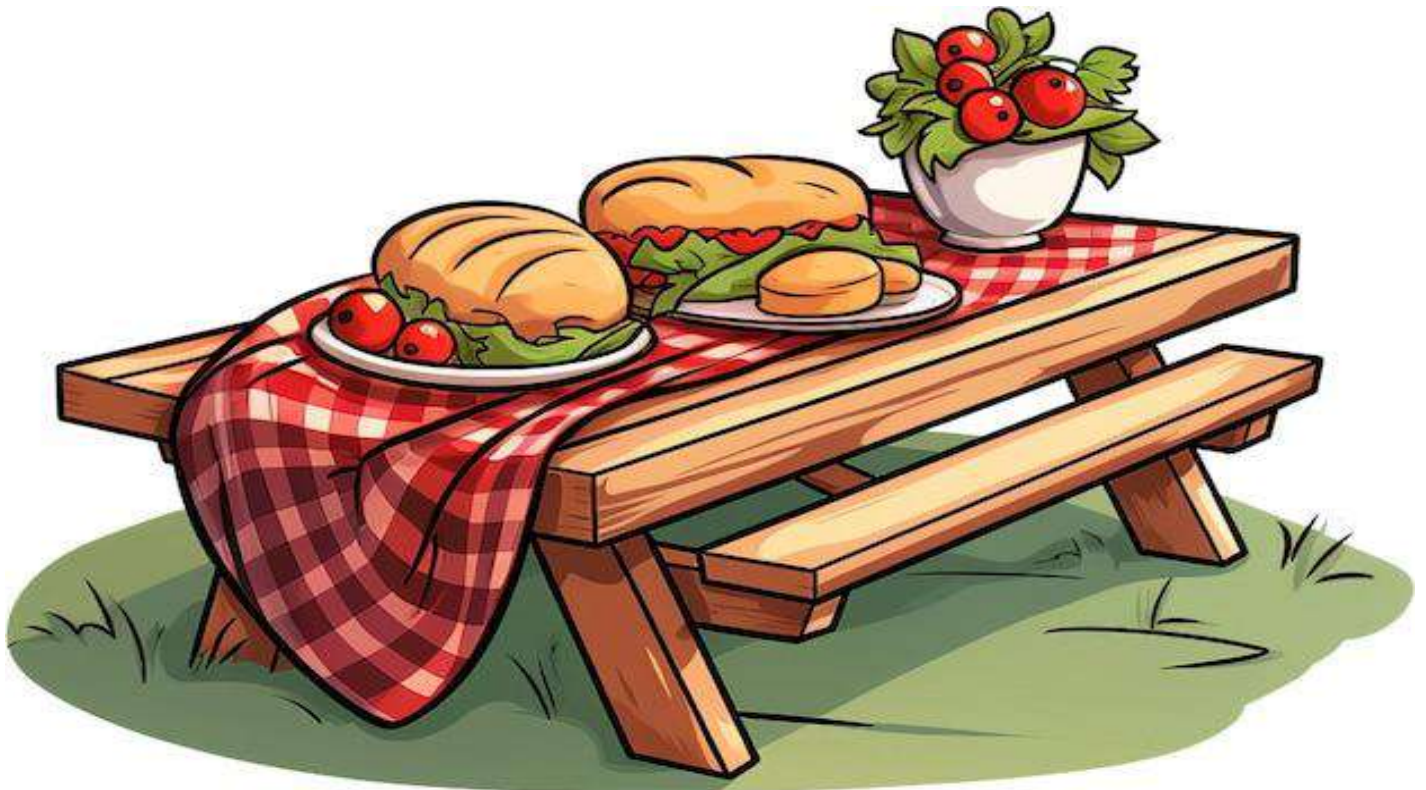
Beverages , Paper plates, Utensils, & Napkins are provided by Chapter

Please bring a dish according to your last name.

Food: A-H: Main Dish I-P: Side Dish Q-Z: Dessert

Directions to picnic: From I-5 heading south, take exit 103. Go to Custer Way (the first light) and turn left. Cross the bridge and turn right on Boston street which winds down around the old Brewery to Deschutes Way. Turn right on Deschutes Way to Grant Road or the Crosby House. (If you go under the freeway, you have gone too far.)

From I-5 heading north, take exit 103 which puts you directly onto Deschutes Way. Go straight, pass Custer Way and look for Grant Street on the right. That's Tumwater Historical Park at the bottom of the hill. Come and have fun!



Weight-loss drug also eases knee pain

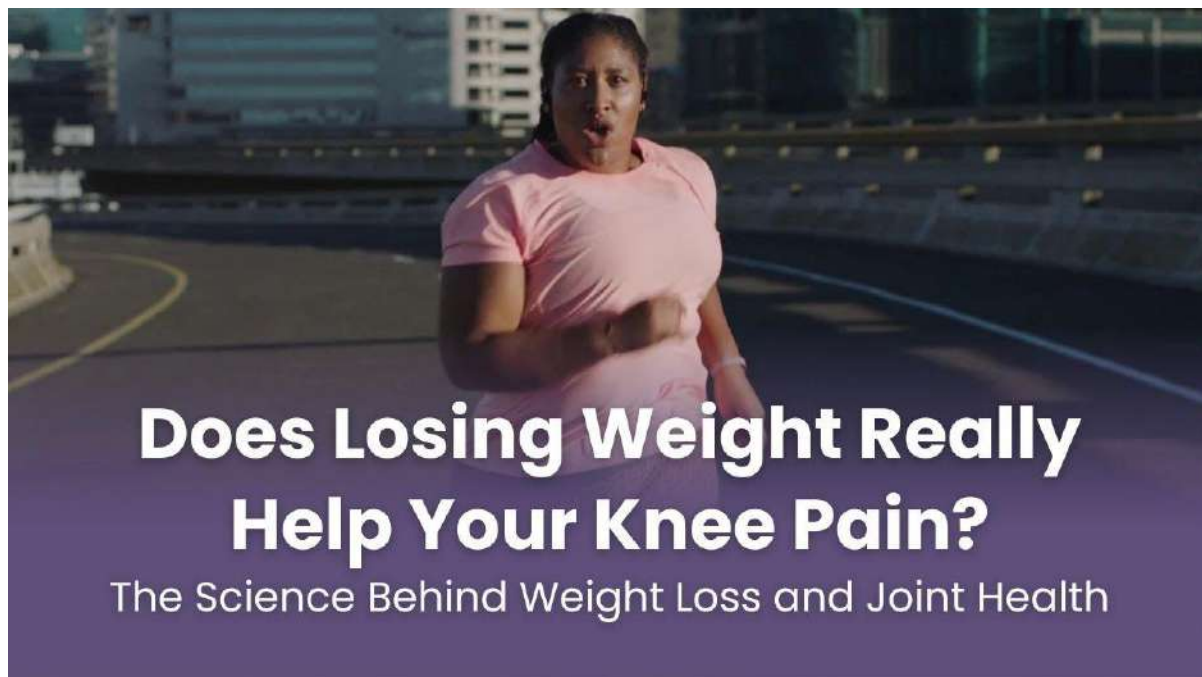
Drug company Eli Lilly is testing a next-generation weight-loss medicine that has produced the largest results ever recorded for this class of drugs and a striking side benefit that surprised even researchers.

The drug is called retatrutide, and according to results announced in December 2025, participants in a 68-week clinical trial lost an average of 28.7 percent of their body weight at the highest dose. According to Eli Lilly, that is roughly 71 pounds for the average participant. By comparison, the popular weight-loss drug Wegovy produces about 15 percent loss, and Zepbound about 22.5 percent.

Retatrutide works by activating three of the body's natural hormones at once — GLP-1, GIP, and glucagon — which is why scientists call it a "triple agonist." The third hormone, glucagon, helps the body burn more energy, in addition to the appetite-suppressing effects of the other two. Existing drugs like Wegovy work on only one or two of these pathways.

The unexpected finding came from a trial focused on adults with both obesity and knee osteoarthritis. According to Rheumatology Advisor, retatrutide reduced knee pain by up to 75.8 percent — a larger drop than weight loss alone would predict. Researchers believe the drug may also have a direct anti-inflammatory effect on joint tissue. More than one in eight participants ended the trial with no knee pain at all.

According to GoodRx, Eli Lilly expects to file for FDA approval in late 2026 or early 2027, with potential approval in 2027 or 2028. The drug is not currently available, and Drugs.com warns that any retatrutide sold by online vendors or compounding pharmacies is illegal.





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Chapter 130 Website:
<https://mendedheartsthurstoncounty.org/>

Mended Hearts National Website:
<https://mendedhearts.org/>

**To Make Suggestions, go to
Suggestion link below:**

[Suggestion Box](#)

Facebook Webpage Address:
<https://www.facebook.com/mendedheartsthurstoncounty>

Chapter Board Meetings

Chapter Board Meetings are open to all Chapter Members. We are currently meeting via ZOOM. If you are interested in attending, contact Michael Blonden at mblonden@msn.com for a Zoom link.

If you are feeling great and would like to help others, why not make a donation to our Chapter (Mended Hearts of Thurston County).
Mail Donation to:

**Mended Hearts Chapter 130
PO Box 5551
Olympia, WA 98509-5551**

Every Dollar Helps. Thanks!!