

This quarterly e-bulletin from Iowa HHS was created for healthcare systems and providers working to prevent and manage chronic disease.

## Health Observances

### FEBRUARY

- American Heart Month
- Black History Month
- Children's Dental Health Month
- National Caregivers Day (17)

### MARCH

- American Diabetes Alert Day (28)
- Brain Injury Awareness Month
- Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
- LGBTQ Health Awareness Wk (20-24)
- National Nutrition Month
- Regd Dietician Nutritionist Day (13)

### APRIL

- National Minority Health Month
- National Public Health Week (3-9)
- Parkinson's Awareness Month
- World Health Day (7)



**Contact Us:** To submit webinars, events, funding opportunities, or health promotion news, contact Cardiovascular Health Coordinator McKyla Carson, at [mckyla.carson@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:mckyla.carson@idph.iowa.gov). View previous Chronic Disease Connections E-Bulletin issues [here](#).

## Sleep Your Way to a Healthier You

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being. It is the time when the body repairs cells, restores energy, reorganizes information, and much more to support healthy brain, heart, and bodily function. Insufficient sleep not only impacts the cognitive function the next day, but it has also been linked to the development and management of a number of chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and depression.

Hypertension, stroke, coronary heart disease, and cardiac arrhythmias have been found to be more common among those with disordered sleep than others without sleep abnormalities. There could also be a possible link between sleep apnea and atherosclerosis. Sleep duration and quality have emerged as predictors of hemoglobin A1c levels, which may also be important for improving blood sugar control. Recent research has found that depressive symptoms may decrease once sleep apnea has been effectively treated and sufficient sleep restored.

While sleep is a critical indicator of disease and recovery, getting better sleep is easier said than done. There are a number of reasons why people are not getting enough quality sleep, including poor sleep habits, sleep disorder, medications, stress, or not having a safe place to sleep.

Providers routinely asking about sleep would not only detect sleep disorders for treatment and provide a better picture of disease management, but it also may improve patient engagement and build trust in the provider. Consider asking the following question to your patients:

“Do you feel rested when you wake up from sleeping?”

The answer to this question can help determine what additional follow-up questions about sleep duration, timing, and conditions are needed. These questions may help identify initial sleep disorders, disease management opportunities, and social determinant of health needs.

For more information about the impacts of sleep on chronic disease, visit [nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation](https://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation). To find patient education materials, visit [cdc.gov/sleep/about\\_sleep/sleep\\_hygiene](https://cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene).

## Upcoming Training Sessions:

- Healthy Heart Ambassador Training - March 18th & 25th, 12-4pm; Free, virtual training. Contact [mckyla.carson@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:mckyla.carson@idph.iowa.gov) to register.

## Celebrate Brain Injury Awareness Month in March

Approximately 1 in 4 adults in Iowa have experienced a brain injury in their lifetime. What was once described as a singular injury with a defined recovery period, brain injury is now being recognized as a condition that can continue to change for many years after its occurrence. While most individuals will continue to see improvements over time, there are others who will experience decline related to neurodegenerative process, engagement in risk behaviors, having other chronic health conditions or psychosocial factors, according to studies out of The Ohio State University.

Individuals with brain injury have higher rates of substance misuse, poor mental health and depression, homelessness, and involvement with the criminal justice system. Screening for brain injury is a way to identify whether an individual has experienced events that put them at a risk for ongoing challenges associated with brain injury. For individuals who screen positive, there are brief assessments to determine how the injury may be impacting them as well as accommodation tips and resources available for support.

For more information about screening and assessments for brain injury, please email [brain.injury@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:brain.injury@idph.iowa.gov) or visit <https://yourlifeiowa.org/brain-injury>.

If you or somebody you know has had a brain injury and need support, please contact a Neuro-Resource Facilitator at the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa by calling 855-444-6443 or emailing [info@biaia.org](mailto:info@biaia.org).



## Best Practices for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and Management

Heart Month, celebrated in February, provides an opportunity for providers and health care systems to identify opportunities to improve heart health in their patient populations. To help in this effort, the CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention provides an evidence-based interventions best practice guide that addresses preventing and controlling cardiovascular disease risk factors for patients after experiencing a cardiac event. These evidence-based interventions include:

- Coordinating Services for Cardiovascular Events:  
Rehabilitation services and emergency medical care following a cardiovascular event.
- Engaging Organizations to Promote Cardiovascular Health:  
Policy and programs for organizational settings and food environments.
- Implementing Technology-based Strategies to Optimize Cardiovascular Care:  
Use of technology to inform clinical decision support systems and telehealth.
- Leveraging Community and Clinical Public Health Workforces:  
Leveraging different sectors of the health workforce, including CHW's.
- Supporting patients in Cardiovascular Disease Self-Management:  
Enable patients to better manage their conditions.

To access the best practice guide and learn more, visit <https://hdsbpc.cdc.gov/sl>.

## Diabetes: A Healthy Mouth Matters

Most people are unaware of how diabetes is linked to the health of the mouth. Diabetes puts a person at a higher risk for gum disease, tooth loss, and mouth pain. Additionally, gum disease may increase the risk of being able to control diabetes. Gum disease treatment in people with type 2 diabetes can lower blood sugar over time and lower the chance of having other problems from diabetes, such as heart and kidney disease.

Because diabetes affects the whole body, including oral health, the effect is even greater when blood sugar is not well controlled, which makes it harder for the body to fight infections. Talk to your patients about oral health and the importance of brushing and flossing at home and visiting the dentist at least once a year. For more resources, visit [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/diabetes-oral-health](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/diabetes-oral-health).

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