

CHRONIC DISEASE CONNECTIONS

American Heart Month

Quarterly e-bulletin from Iowa HHS for healthcare systems and providers working to prevent and manage chronic disease.

Health Observances

FEBRUARY

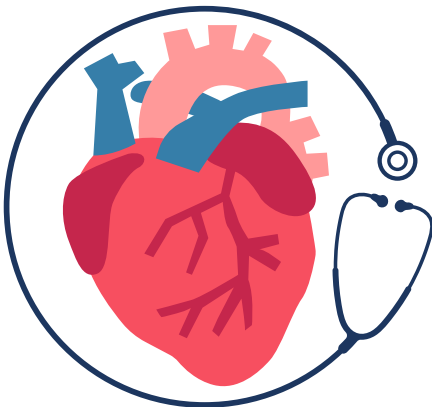
- American Heart Month
- Black History Month
- National Wear Red Day (Feb 7)
- Children's Dental Health Month
- National Caregivers Day (Feb 21)

MARCH

- Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
- National Nutrition Month
- National Kidney Month
- LGBTQ Health Awareness Week (Mar 17 - 21)

APRIL

- Minority Health Month
- Public Health Week (Apr 7-13)
- Parkinson's Awareness Month
- World Health Day (Apr 7)



Contact Us: Submit webinars, events, funding opportunities, or health promotion news to dani.bixby@hhs.iowa.gov.

View previous Chronic Disease Connections E-Bulletin issues [here](#).

February is American Heart Month, a time to raise awareness about heart disease, the leading cause of death in Iowa and the nation.

Key Actions for Physicians During American Heart Month

American Heart Month is an excellent opportunity to engage with patients, colleagues, and communities to foster heart health awareness. Here are a few strategies that can help make a meaningful difference:

- **Increase Screening and Early Detection:** Remind patients of the importance of regular screenings for high blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and diabetes. Encourage patients to get screened and take advantage of telehealth services or mobile clinics that may make it easier for them to access care.
- **Promote Lifestyle Changes:** Encourage patients to adopt heart-healthy habits such as regular physical activity, healthy eating, and smoking cessation. Consider working with community resources, such as dietitians and fitness experts, to provide ongoing support and motivation.
- **Leverage Technology for Better Outcomes:** Innovative solutions such as telemedicine and remote monitoring devices are transforming cardiovascular care, especially for patients in rural areas.
- **Advocate for Heart Health Education:** Education is key to empowering patients to make informed decisions about their heart health. Take the time to educate patients about the signs and symptoms of heart disease, the importance of medication adherence, and how to manage risk factors.
- **Collaborate for Comprehensive Care:** Partner with pharmacists, dietitians, nurses, and community health workers to deliver coordinated care that addresses both the clinical and social determinants of health. Community-based referral networks can also enhance access to lifestyle programs, smoking cessation support, and nutrition counseling.

Whether through patient education, increased screening, or community outreach, take an active role during American Heart Month to help reduce the impact of heart disease. For resources on cardiovascular disease prevention and care, visit the [American Heart Association's website](#).

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a key opportunity for physicians to highlight the importance of screening and prevention. Colorectal cancer is preventable with regular screenings, yet many eligible patients remain unscreened. Colonoscopies and at-home tests such as Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) and Cologuard can provide early detection and significantly reduce one's risk of getting colorectal cancer.

Encourage patients to begin screening at age 45 by offering screening options and discussing the importance of early detection, especially for those at higher risk due to personal or family history or genetic factors. Promoting a healthy lifestyle - balanced diet, regular exercise, and smoking cessation - can lower the risk of developing colorectal cancer.

This March, let's work together to increase awareness, improve screening rates, and promote prevention to reduce the impact of colorectal cancer. For resources, visit [Iowa HHS's Colorectal Cancer Screening Program site](#).



2023 Heart Disease and Stroke Report

The 2023 Heart Disease and Stroke Report provides data on the state of cardiovascular health in Iowa. As healthcare providers, it's important to examine the report's findings, which highlight trends in heart disease and stroke, risk factors, and health disparities within the state.



Key Findings from the 2023 Iowa Report

1. Heart disease continues to be the number one cause of death in Iowa, with over 7,000 deaths. This emphasizes the need for continued focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce heart disease across the state.
2. There are significant health disparities in Iowa, particularly among rural populations and communities of color. Minority groups, including African American and Hispanic Iowans, experience higher rates of heart disease and stroke.
3. Hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and smoking are key contributors to heart disease and stroke in Iowa.

For more information and to access the full report, visit [Iowa HHS's Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention website](#).

Alzheimer's Disease Related Dementias (ADRD) Website Updated

The ADRD Program has updated their website to include professional training resources relating to dementia. These trainings and certified courses provide up-to-date information and best practices for direct care workers, community health workers and more. The ADRD webpage also has informational links about Alzheimer's and other dementias, resources for caregivers and Iowa's State Strategic Plan to Address Dementia.

Visit <https://hhs.iowa.gov/aging-services/nutrition-health/alzheimers-other-dementias>.



National Nutrition Month

During the month of March, learn about making informed food choices and developing healthful eating and physical activity habits. This year's National Nutrition Month theme is "Food Connects Us." Food connects us to our cultures, our families and our friends. Sharing a meal is an opportunity to learn about its preparation, who made it and where the ingredients were sourced. Health, memories, traditions, seasons and access can all impact our relationship with food. While these factors influence the foods we eat, the foods we eat also affect our health.



Week 1: Connect with Food.

Explore where your food comes from.

Week 2: Connect with a

Nutrition Expert. Ask your doctor for a referral to an RDN.

Week 3: Explore the Connection Between Food and Culture. Experiment using different ingredients or cooking techniques.

Week 4: Build the Connection Across All Stages of Life.

Learn how nutrient needs may change with age.

LATEST NEWS

- [FDA Updates "Healthy" Claim, Providing a Refreshed Tool for Consumers.](#)
- [HealthCare.gov Breaks New Record with 16.6 Million Consumers Signing Up for Coverage – the Highest Ever for January 1 Coverage](#)
- [HHS Announces Cost Savings for 64 Prescription Drugs Thanks to the Medicare Prescription Drug Inflation Rebate Program Established by the Lower Cost Prescription Drug Law](#)
- [FDA Approves First Medication for Obstructive Sleep Apnea](#)

Diabetes and Mental Health: Help is available.

FIND SUPPORT 24/7

for alcohol, drug, gambling, mental health, suicidal thoughts and other related concerns.



CALL: (855) 581-8111



TEXT: (855) 895-8398



CHAT: YourLifelowa.org

Living with diabetes can affect your mental health. Stress, anxiety, and feelings of being overwhelmed are common when managing a chronic condition like diabetes. Prioritizing mental health is just as important as physical care—and support is always available. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), individuals with diabetes are two to three times more likely to experience depression than those without diabetes and only 25%-50% of those affected receive treatment.

Additionally, individuals with diabetes are 20% more likely to experience anxiety compared to their peers. Your Life Iowa is a free, 24/7 statewide helpline supporting thousands each year. Whether you have questions or concerns about alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health, or thoughts of suicide, the trained and compassionate counselors are available to help by phone, text, or chat. Visit [YourLifelowa.org](#) for free, confidential support, and resources, including a Healthcare Provider Toolkit to start meaningful conversations with patients or your community.

Let's Get Real - HHS Campaign for Children's Vaccines

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) launched the [Let's Get Real](#) campaign to address misinformation and give parents the balanced information they need about childhood vaccines. The campaign provides verifiable facts so parents can get the information they want to make informed vaccine decisions, and it shares stories from doctors and peers on why most of us rely on vaccines to protect our children. Let's Get Real also offers tools for health care professionals with pediatric patients.

