



## **In Iowa's Interest: Stay Heart Healthy This Month! February is American Heart Month** *by Senator Tom Harkin*

Seeing more than 10,000 Iowa students dance and exercise alongside First Lady Michelle Obama earlier this month, I could not be more encouraged. I have championed wellness and prevention initiatives for decades and am pleased that the First Lady also recognizes the critical importance of prevention and health promotion. They allow us to live longer, healthier lives – and they are our best bet for restraining health care costs. And there is no better time of the year to recognize the importance wellness efforts can make than during February – American Heart Month.

Each year, the United States loses an estimated 630,000 people to heart disease. And treatment of this disease accounts for one out of every six dollars spent on health care. According to the American Heart Association, the number one killer of women is heart disease and more women die of heart disease than all forms of cancer combined. With these troubling statistics, this February, I urge all Iowans to become aware of their personal heart health.

We all know that eating healthier and being more active can help our heart, but talking to your doctor about your personal well-being is imperative.

According to the American Heart Association, here are some basic tips for preventing heart disease:

- Eat a heart-healthy diet, with plenty of fruits and vegetables, and low intake of “bad” fats and appropriate intake of “good” fats, such as olive oil and fish oil.
- Exercise regularly, ideally at least 30 minutes a day.
- Quit smoking!
- Maintain an appropriate body weight.
- Get regular cholesterol screenings, and keep your cholesterol levels in a desirable range.
- Manage your stress levels.

Prevention is the best medicine, for bodies and budgets alike. This is why I fought to include a whole range of provisions in the Affordable Care Act designed to transform America's sick care system into a genuine health care system, one that emphasizes wellness, prevention, and public health – keeping people out of the hospital in the first place.

For more information about the American Heart Association and Heart Health Month, please visit [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org), or feel free to contact any of my Washington, D.C. or Iowa offices at [www.harkin.senate.gov](http://www.harkin.senate.gov).