

Each year, February is American Heart Month. The American Heart Association (AHA) was founded in 1924 by six cardiologists in Chicago, Illinois. The AHA has grown over the past 100 years to become the largest organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. The vital information and support the AHA provides enables us to live healthier lives in healthier communities. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. In 2022, 1 in every 5 deaths was caused by heart disease. Heart disease has various causes. High blood pressure is a leading cause along with high cholesterol and smoking.

High blood pressure

High blood pressure is a leading cause of heart disease and one of the main causes of kidney disease. High blood pressure can also lead to major health concerns including heart attack or stroke.

High blood pressure is also known as a “silent killer” because most individuals who have high blood pressure may not experience any symptoms. Having your blood pressure checked by a health care professional is the only way to determine if you have high blood pressure. Only a health care professional can make this diagnosis.

Blood pressure readings include two numbers and are written as a fraction. Systolic pressure (the top number) is the pressure in your blood vessels when the heart is beating. Diastolic pressure (the bottom number) is the pressure in your blood vessels when the heart rests between beats.

A normal blood pressure for adults (age 18 or older) is less than 120/80. According to the American Heart Association, there are several stages for your blood pressure. Below shows the markers for high blood pressure stages 1 and 2:

	Stage 1	Stage 2
Systolic pressure	130 – 139	140 and above
Diastolic pressure	80 – 89	90 and above

Heart and kidney disease connection

Your heart and kidneys are essential to maintaining a healthy body. The kidneys help control blood pressure and clean the blood. The heart pumps oxygen-rich blood throughout the body to your organs so that they can function properly and effectively.

If your kidneys are not working correctly, your heart works harder than normal and often with poorer function. If your heart is not working properly, this can damage your blood vessels leading to your blood pumping less efficiently and damage to other organs.

Heart disease and kidney disease share similar risk factors like diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and family medical history. In addition to those risk factors, having one of these diseases increases the likelihood you’ll develop the other.

It is important to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle with regular checkups so that issues can be found and addressed early with the goal of improved health outcomes.

How can I reduce the risk?

Managing your blood pressure is a lifetime responsibility. Below are some lifestyle changes that you can implement to manage your blood pressure and reduce your risk of further complications.

- Eat a well-balanced diet. Healthy diets that consist of food low in trans fat and sodium.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Participate in regular physical activity. This helps control weight, strengthen the heart, and can assist with stress management.
- Quit smoking.
- Be compliant with your medications, even if you feel well.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This section of our monthly newsletter will focus on support and resources offered both by the Organ Transplant Center and throughout the nation. Please utilize these as you need them and reach out with any questions.

Kidney and Pancreas Line: 319-356-1136

Liver Line: 319-356-1137

Heart Line: 319-356-1028

Lung Line: 319-356-2016

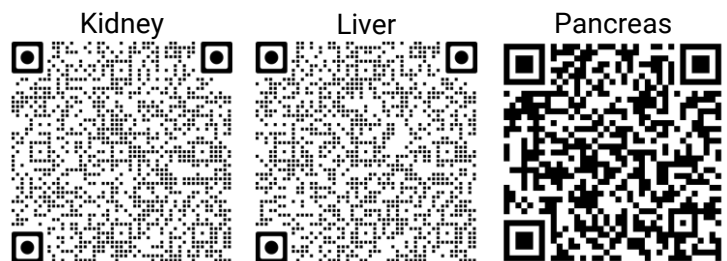
Medicare and Transplant

Medicare eligibility is based on age, disability, having end-stage kidney failure, or receiving a kidney transplant. No other organ transplant or need for organ transplant qualifies one for Medicare. There is a 1-year enrollment window for Medicare from date of kidney transplant. Delaying enrollment can increase chances of higher out-of-pocket expenses for anti-rejection medication. Medicare Advantage plans cover anti-rejection medications, and out-of-pocket expenses are subject to plan.

* For further questions or coverage changes, please contact the Organ Transplant Center Financial Counselors.

Video Resources

The Organ Transplant Center has put together videos to better explain the transplant evaluation process and provide additional patient education. Please scan the QR codes below to access these videos.



Organ Transplant Support Group

The UI Organ Transplant Center hosts a hybrid support group every other month – in-person and by Zoom. Each group is focused on a specific topic with speakers followed by time for discussion. If you have any questions, please contact 319-467-8385.

Location:

Iowa Donor Network
550 Madison Avenue
North Liberty, IA 52317

Date:

February 13, 2025

Speaker: UIHC physical therapist

Zoom Information:

Meeting ID: 992 7107 7496
Passcode: 967123

Additional Resources

Social Security Disability

- [Adult Disability Starter Kit](#)
- [SSI Child Disability Starter Kit](#)

National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC): [How to Apply](#)

Iowa Anatomical Gift Fund: [Application](#)

Iowa Donor Network / Writing Your Donor Family:
<https://www.iowadonornetwork.org/transplant-recipients/writing-your-donor-family>

University of Iowa Telepsychology Training Clinic offers free, short-term counseling to lowans with limited access to mental health care.

- [Click here](#) to see if you qualify