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Fast Facts from the WHA Information Center: February is American Heart Month

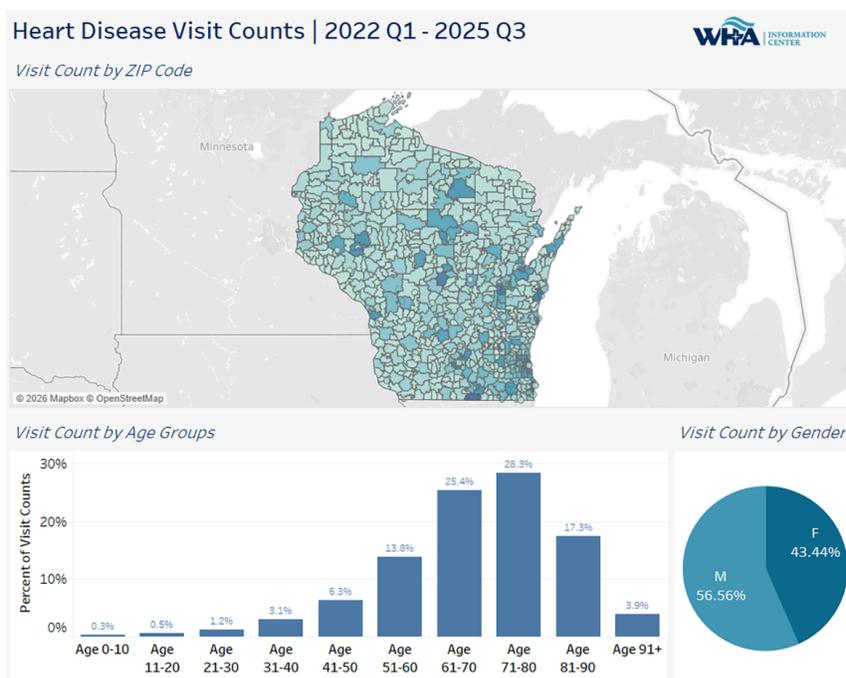
February is known as American Heart Month, bringing awareness to cardiovascular health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, with one, with one person dying every 33 seconds in the U.S. from the disease..

Approximately 702,000 people in the country died from heart disease in 2021—that is 1 in every 5 deaths (CDC, 2022). Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease, affecting about affecting about 1 in 20 adults aged 20 and older. In 2022, 371,000 people died from coronary artery disease. In the U.S., someone has a heart attack about every 40 seconds. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for people of most racial and ethnic groups.

The WHA Information Center analyzed heart disease claims from all places of service from January 2022 through September 2025. The age group with the highest number of visits is 71-80, followed closely by 61-70. The average age of a patient visiting with a heart disease-related condition is 68 years old, but it is important to note that heart disease can happen at any age. High rates of blood pressure and obesity among younger people put them at higher risk for heart disease earlier in life. Based on WHAIC data, men have a higher percent of total visits for heart disease than women, however, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the U.S.

Risk factors for heart disease from the CDC include:

- **High Blood Pressure:** High blood pressure is a medical condition where the pressure of the blood in your blood vessels is too high, which then affects your heart and other major organs.
- **High Cholesterol:** Intaking more cholesterol than the body needs creates extra cholesterol that builds up in the walls of the arteries, including those of the heart. This leads to narrowing of the arteries and can decrease the blood flow to the heart, brain, kidneys and other parts of the body.
- **Smoking:** Cigarette smoke damages the heart and blood vessels, nicotine raises blood pressure and carbon monoxide from smoke reduces the amount of oxygen carried in the blood, all increasing the risk of heart disease.
- **Obesity:** This is an excess of body fat which can in turn lead to high blood pressure and diabetes.
- **Diabetes:** Having diabetes can cause a buildup of sugar in the blood which increases the risk of death from heart disease.



IN THIS ISSUE

- Wisconsin Hospital Association Advocacy Day Draws 1,100 Advocates From Across Wisconsin
- Children's Wisconsin Receives Wisconsin Hospital Association's Advocacy All-Star Award
- Governor Tony Evers, Rep. Clint Moses Receive 2026 Health Care Advocate of the Year Awards from WHA
- Wisconsin's Health Care Workforce is Growing, But Not Fast Enough to Meet Rising Demand
- Legislation Creating New Regulations for Hospital Nurse Staffing Proposed in Wisconsin
- Register Today for the 2026 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Webinar Series – Part 1: Annual Workforce Report
- Join WHA in Washington, D.C. on April 20-21 for AHA Annual Meeting
- WHA Foundation Releases its 2025 Year in Review Report
- Physician Leadership Development Conference Only Two Weeks Away
- Fast Facts from the WHA Information Center: February is American Heart Month

EDUCATION EVENTS

Mar. 4, 2026

Spring 2026 Annual Survey Training

Mar. 5, 2026

Operational Vacancy: An Effective Tool for Workforce Planning

Mar. 12, 2026

Spring 2026 Annual Survey Training