Barb Magee and her daughter Madison share more than the same eyes, smile and love of fitness. Both Waukee, Iowa, residents have heart disease. Madison was born with a ventricular septal defect (VSD), an opening between the heart's two lower chambers. Blood that's returned from the lungs and pumped into the left chamber seeps back into the right chamber through the hole instead of being pumped into the aorta. The heart has to work much harder to pump this extra blood and sometimes enlarges. Fortunately, this defect was repaired when Madison was 2, and she has been in excellent health ever since. Barb's journey started in July 2004 when her voice became raspy. After months of wondering what was wrong, she learned while on vacation in Hawaii that she had a thoracic aortic aneurysm. An aneurysm is a bulge in a blood vessel and is dangerous because it may burst. The aorta, the main artery leading away from the heart, can sometimes develop an aneurysm in the part of it that passes through the thorax (the chest cavity). Barb had no other symptoms related to heart disease. In March 2005, she had surgery and today is fully recovered. Although several male members of her family have heart disease, Barb never thought it would happen to her or Madison. Her experience has made life more precious. "Heart disease touches everyone," Barb says. "You need to take care of your heart, so your heart can take care of you."

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Barb's and Madison's experience helps to show why the American Heart Association and its volunteers are advocating for more research, education and screening to help prevent and cure heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases, the No. 1 killer of women in Iowa and the United States.

FACTS

Women and Cardiovascular Disease: IOWA

- Heart disease and stroke account for **31.4%** of all female deaths in Iowa.
- On average, about **12** women die from heart disease and stroke in Iowa each day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-adjusted Average (Annual) Deaths</th>
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<td>State Rate 319</td>
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<td>Nation Rate 351</td>
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Heart Disease Rates, All Women, Ages 35+, 2000-2006

- Heart disease alone is the **leading** cause of death in Iowa, accounting for **3,485** female deaths in 2009.
- Stroke is the **No. 3** cause of death for females in Iowa, accounting for **1,010** female deaths in 2009.
- Nearly **58.1%** of women in Iowa are obese and overweight.
- In Iowa, **14.8%** of women smoke cigarettes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mortality data based on WISQARS Leading Cause of Death Reports, 2009; state maps from the Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention; risk factor data from the BRFSS, 2010.

* Overweight is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 25.0-29.9 kg/m² and obese is defined as having a BMI of 30.0 kg/m² or greater.