



## February is American Heart Month

Almost 80% of heart attacks are preventable: follow these tips to keep your heart healthy.

While heart attacks are common and incredibly scary, many of them are preventable. If you focus on practicing healthy habits, you are much more likely to keep your heart healthy, with the goal of avoiding the number one worldwide cause of death for adults. Here are four areas that are the most vital to maintaining heart health:

**Don't smoke.** People who smoke are 2 - 4 times more likely to experience heart disease than people who don't smoke. Smoking can damage the lining of your arteries, which can ultimately result in chest pain, arrhythmias, heart attacks and heart failure.

**Maintain a healthy and balanced diet.** There are a lot of healthy choices available, especially if you take the time to plan your meals ahead of time. Be sure to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, skinless poultry and fish, nuts, and beans. And moderation is key when it comes to saturated fats, sodium, and sugar.

**Exercise regularly.** Try to get 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (i.e. brisk walking) each week (which is only about 21 minutes a day). If you're able, rotate in some vigorous activity such as running, swimming, biking, or hiking uphill.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** If you eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and avoid smoking, you're more likely to maintain a healthy weight. And maintaining a healthy weight contributes to your overall health and wellness.

[Wellness coaching is available](#) at no cost for Kaiser Permanente members to manage your weight, quit tobacco, reduce stress, get more active, or make healthier food choices.

Some additional tips for preventing heart disease are:

- Maintain a healthy blood pressure, and blood sugar, cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- Limit alcohol intake (one drink a day or less)
- Manage stress with helpful tools like meditation, yoga, massage, or breathing exercises
- Seek help for concerns with depression or mental health

Enjoy February – be helpful, be healthy, and be heart strong,

**Edward Kao, MD**

Physician-in-Chief

Kaiser Permanente South San Francisco Medical Center