

Heart Attack Biography

I am a 52-year old chartered surveyor. I am married with 6 children ranging in age from 21 to 32. From my teens until my mid 30's I played a lot of football and regularly exercised. However, this significantly diminished from age 35. I was not particularly overweight or a heavy drinker, but I have been a heavy smoker (20 – 30 per day) since my late teens. My job is highly stressful and I would often work long hours, up to 12 hours per day over 6 days per week. I had always considered myself to be reasonably healthy; however, in June 2010 I started getting breathless and experiencing chest pains when I exerted myself. Whilst not extremely painful those symptoms were unusual and worrying and I decided to visit my GP who I had not attended for many years.

The GP's initial thoughts were that I had angina which the GP explained is the result of restricted blood flow to the heart. I was referred to Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary and shortly thereafter got an outpatient appointment and treadmill test after which it was recommended that I have an angiogram test. The angiogram test confirmed that I had a blockage in the right side coronary artery and an appointment was made to have a stent inserted in the artery (5th October 2010). I was given medication including a GTN spray which could be used to alleviate any symptoms if they occurred. During the period from July to October 2010, I felt reasonably well, using the spray when required and led my regular life, even attending my daughter's wedding in Cyprus in September. My appointment for stent insertion at the Golden Jubilee National Hospital in Glasgow was for 10.30am on Tuesday 5th October. At 3am that morning I awoke suffering prolonged angina symptoms which were unaffected by the GTN spray. My wife, a trained nurse, called the paramedics to the house and I was taken to the Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary in Dumfries, where it was diagnosed that I was having a heart attack.

I was given a thrombolysing 'clot busting' drug which alleviated the heart attack and was then taken by ambulance to the Golden Jubilee National Hospital in Clydebank. Investigations during the stent insertion procedure revealed that a further blockage had occurred in the other, left side artery and I had 3 stents inserted (1 right side and 2 left side arteries). I was transferred back to Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary the next day where I stayed until Saturday 9th October and then returned home.

There then followed a period of rest and rehabilitation involving complete rest initially, building up to short and then longer walks each day. I then commenced cardiac rehabilitation classes from 1st November attending on a Monday and a Thursday afternoon each week until 31st January 2011 (24 classes in all). The classes comprise of around one hour of group exercise plus an education talk each Thursday. I have found the cardiac rehabilitation classes to be extremely beneficial, indeed essential, in my recovery and very enjoyable. I have just finished by cardiac rehabilitation programme and feel completely recovered, in fact healthier than before the initial symptoms occurred.

I was off work for 8 week but have now returned full time. Hopefully with a healthier non-smoking and regularly exercising lifestyle and with eternal thanks and gratitude towards the wonderful, excellent, professional staff of the NHS.