

Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Dr. Amy L. Doneen, DNP, ARNP

April • May 2022



*Thoughts from
Dr. Amy*



The Lifesaving Treatment Many Cardiologists Don't Prescribe

Joe I. used to lead a very limited — and rather lonely — life. “I wasn’t healthy enough for any sustained physical activity, including sex or even going out on a date,” says the retired real estate broker from Granbury, Texas. “I had such severe chest pain that I couldn’t even walk from my house to the car without taking nitroglycerin — and I needed it so often that I had to ration the 100 pills that my insurance plan allowed me every month, so I didn’t run out.”

His symptoms were so severe that specialists advised a heart transplant. But Joe balked. “I wasn’t sold on the idea that I needed a new heart when I’d never had a heart attack.”

However, he worried that he’d run out of treatment options. He’d already undergone quadruple bypass for his coronary artery disease (CAD), dramatically improved his lifestyle, and was taking several medications — yet kept getting sicker. Was there anything left to try, short of getting a new heart?

Determined to Avoid His Father’s Fate

Joe feared that he was on the same tragic trajectory as his father. “He died at age 62 from a heart attack, five years after his quadruple bypass surgery — and I knew that if I didn’t find the right treatment, I was rapidly approaching a point at which my life would also be cut short,” recalls Joe.

Joe’s battle with arterial disease began when he developed angina while hiking. Also known as angina pectoris, angina is chest pain due to insufficient flow of oxygenated blood to heart muscle. This painful symptom affects about 10 million Americans, with about 500,000 new cases each year. The most common culprit is CAD, which can lead to narrowing of the arteries that supply the heart.

Then 57, Joe was treated with open heart surgery and a quadruple bypass. He was the same age as his father had been when the older man had undergone these procedures decades earlier. Afterwards, he spent six weeks in cardiac rehab, receiving education on healthy lifestyle changes to enhance recovery after cardiac surgery. Determined to

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