

An Unforgettable Mother's Day,

"No, - not you of all people! ", was the general response from my family and friends, when they were told that I had just had a heart attack. Eight months later, it is still hard to believe that it happened, just "out of the blue", with no warning signs whatsoever.

I was 58 years old at the time and have always had a healthy lifestyle, e.g, non-smoker, healthy diet, slim, only the occasional amount of alcohol .I practised yoga and walked, daily.

I have had high blood pressure for a number of years, but that was controlled with medication.

Last year (2016), on Mother's Day, we went for a picnic at the beach. It was cold and windy, but still lovely, sitting by the ocean. After lunch, we had a coffee at the café, - I had a large mug. We then had a really long, beautiful walk along the beach and I will never forget that I had just commented about how therapeutic it was, when I had a strange sensation in my throat. We were walking back to the car and into the strong headwind and I presumed that it must have been the cold air. I wrapped my scarf around my mouth and thought that I would feel better, once I was back in the car. However, the feeling continued and I had slight tightness around my collarbones. I had no other symptoms and my husband thought it might have been my lungs and suggested I try a puff of his Ventolin ,that he uses for asthma.

I didn't feel ill at all, - I just had mild discomfort, but instinct must have kicked in, as I decided to phone the" Health Direct" line for advice. I really thought I might be wasting their time, but was advised to get to hospital as quickly as possible, as the nurse stated that he thought it was an angina attack.

It was then that I was diagnosed with SCAD, after having an angiogram.

I was fortunate that it was a small tear and that I had no further treatment, apart from being put on various medications. I was discharged after two nights and shortly afterwards, attended rehabilitation talks and a number of Cardiac Re-hab sessions at the gym. I found these really beneficial and reassuring.

There were a couple of factors that I think may have contributed to having the SCAD. The first is that I had forgotten to take my blood pressure tablet that morning. Also, I had drunk a very large mug of caffeinated coffee and then embarked on a really long walk.

Since then, I NEVER forget my tablets and I have also given up caffeine, - I now stick to drinking organic decaf tea and coffee. This helps with my blood pressure.

It is a huge shock, experiencing something like this, but I have found having support from others, is a huge help. Also, with time, I feel I have gained a certain sense of acceptance. Initially, I did get sharp, stabbing like pains quite regularly, but was reassured by my wonderful cardiologist, that it is muscular. I still get them occasionally, when I have over exerted myself, but take it as a message from my body, to take it easy.

Once it has happened, I think you are always mindful about the possibility of it happening again. However, I feel reassured, being aware of the condition now , having medications to help and also the knowledge that I should seek medical attention, if I am in any doubt whatsoever. Because of

these factors,, I am in a much better position and feel positive about the future. I really appreciate every day now and am determined to get on with life, (as long as I am carrying my spray!).

I am doing “Zumba Gold “ classes each week, which I love and have also resumed daily walking and modified yoga.

My husband and I are off to our son’s wedding in Holland this year and we are then going to travel to Spain, Portugal and England. There is a lot to look forward to.

I wish you luck with your recovery and SCAD journey and remember, - never feel that you are alone,- there is always someone to reach out to.

The Australian SCAD Survivors group, started by Pam Mckenzie has been a huge help and wonderful comfort to so many of us.