

I guess you could say my story started in 2009 when my sister suffered from multiple NSTEMI heart attacks resulting in a double bypass and was later diagnosed with SCAD. It was such a scary time for our whole family as she very nearly didn't make it. Little did I know that her history would save my life 6 years later.

I had high blood pressure throughout my first pregnancy in 2011 and then after my second was born in 2013 and again towards the end of my twin pregnancy in 2015. I gave birth to the twins naturally and around that time, I had influenza and was coughing continuously for about 8 weeks.

When my babies were just 8 days old, at around 3pm, I had what I thought was a pulled muscle across my shoulder blades (made sense with the coughing and recent child birth). I took a Panadol and popped a heat pack onto it and the pain went away. In the early hours of the morning the next day, around 2am, I was woken up with the same pain. I tried the heat pack / Panadol again and it didn't work. My awesome husband was sleeping at the other end of the house with the kids so I could recover from the birth and coughing and he brought the twins in for a feed. I told him the pulled muscle was hurting again, fed the babies, and he took them back to bed.

A couple of hours later, I actually googled heart attack symptoms but dismissed it as there was no other pain besides across my shoulder blades. I rang 13HEALTH and described my symptoms and they said they would send out a doctor. It got to 6:30am and they still hadn't arrived. By this stage, I had pain in the tops of both arms and down my left arm. The doctor turned up just after 7am and gave me pain relief tablets that did nothing. By now, the pain in my left arm was so intense I could barely speak. He said that my blood pressure was up and he would like me to go to hospital. No need for an ambulance he said. So, I fed the twins (boy and girl), called my mother in law (who lives in our granny flat) to watch our other 2 kids (1 yr. old daughter and 3 yr. old son), and my husband took me and the twins to the hospital. It was just after 8 by the time we got there.

I was still convinced that it was just a pulled muscle as they were doing any ECG. I kept telling my husband not to worry. It was at this point I told them about my sister's history and he exclaimed "that's it!" I still didn't believe him. I was on morphine and asking them to keep the dosage low enough so I could feed the babies again. I fed my little girl and was half way through feeding my little boy when they came in and said I needed a CT scan immediately. I stopped feeding my son to go in right away. Had I known that would be the last time I would ever breastfeed again, I would have savoured the moment a little longer. This still upsets me when I think about it.

They took me in past a bewildered older lady who had been taken out so I could go in. They took me straight from CT scan to the Cath lab for an angiogram. Still believing it was a pulled muscle, as they wheeled me past the nurse's station, one of them yelled out "troponin is 350". It was only then that I thought ... crap. I've had a heart attack!

I'll never forget them wheeling me past my husband and telling him to come and say goodbye with the babies. Watching him at the end of a hallway looking so scared with our tiny babies in the pram as I was going in for surgery will be forever in my mind.

I watched the surgery and saw the tear right away. It was repaired with two stents end to end. 6cm all up. I was ok until they came up with blood thinning tablets and told me that I couldn't breastfeed any more. It was then that I cried uncontrollably. They were so tiny and I was now rendered useless (in my mind). It has taken a long time to be ok with it. It's now been 2 years and the twins are gorgeous and healthy. I didn't need to be worried but breastfeeding the twins was something I had really been looking forward to and it was taken from me when they were just 9 days old. It wasn't fair!

I spent the next 5 days in CCU recovering whilst also still coughing from the influenza, and trying to dry up my milk that I so desperately wanted to give to my babies. Amongst all of this, I also had an allergic reaction to the contrast dye. I must have looked a sight.

All in all, my ejection fraction went from 42 a year ago to 50 earlier this year. I am doing well and loving being here for my 4 gorgeous kids and amazing husband. It's still hard to comprehend and I still have bad days but having my sister to talk to about it all has been a real help. If it wasn't for her, I don't know if they would have picked up what it was in time as I had no risk factors. I've never smoked, never tried drugs, am not overweight, and only drink occasionally. I was only 33 at the time too. Interestingly, the same age my sister was. The 2 heart attacks I had were the STEMI type and my cardiologist said I would not have survived a 3rd. I owe her my life!

Thanks for reading my story

Tahnee ♥