

CHRISTIE THOMPSON



Christie Thompson is living proof that knowing the symptoms of a heart attack can literally mean the difference between life and death. Just one month before she suffered her heart attack, she had chuckled at an entertaining video her sister-in-law had forwarded via email. Produced by the American Heart Association in 2011, the entertaining vignette entitled “Just a Little Heart Attack” was meant to be a wake-up call for busy women who tend to ignore common symptoms.

“My sister-in-law is one of those great people who tries to save the world one email forward at a time,” Christie jokes. “I am very lucky she shared this message with me.”

While getting ready for bed one night, Christie experienced sharp pains in her chest. When the pains didn’t subside after a few moments, she thought of the video she had seen and felt positive she was having a heart attack. She called both 9-1-1 and her daughter right away. She was home alone and knew she needed help fast.

When the EMTs arrived they confirmed Christie’s suspicions and rushed her to the nearest hospital. Within hours of her initial symptoms Christie had a stent inserted into an artery that was 100 percent blocked.

The most startling aspect of the entire experience, she says, was having no warning that something was wrong.

“I’d had a good check up at my doctor’s office just months before,” she says. “I am very proactive about my health and I get all the recommended tests so for me this truly came out of nowhere.”

In the days before she experienced the attack she had felt just fine—walking her dogs for an hour or two at a time, hanging holiday lights on her house and shopping with her daughter in preparation for her upcoming wedding.

That wedding became just the motivation Christie needed to get well—and quickly.

“I was lying there hooked up to IVs, an oxygen tank and all kinds of wires but I just kept picturing myself dancing at my daughter’s wedding,” she says. “The wedding was just three weeks away so I made it my goal to get well by then.”

Christie’s determination led to her release just a few days after her heart attack. She made it home in time for Thanksgiving dinner, attended her daughter’s bridal shower the next day and three weeks later danced at the wedding, just as she’d planned.

She attributes her recovery to the speed with which she was treated and her own commitment to the cardiac rehab process.

“Rehab was not easy for me but I stuck with it,” she says. “After the official program was over I created my own routine that included cardio every single day and healthier eating.”

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Christie also knows that understanding her symptoms and seeking immediate help likely made the biggest difference of all. With no family history of heart disease, and no health warnings to make her think her heart might be in danger, she credits that video with making the symptoms stick in her head.

“It was so entertaining that I really absorbed the message and I remembered it when it mattered most,” she says. “I’ve shared it with everyone I know because I believe it saved my life.”

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