



ON THE WAY TO *heart* HEALTH

ANGIOPLASTY AND CARDIAC REHAB IMPACT TWO LIVES IN A BIG WAY



After Cathy Smith experienced dizziness and chest pain, a stress test revealed a coronary blockage, which was successfully treated with angioplasty.

A brief spell of lightheadedness after a 20-minute walk at Stone Mountain seemed minor, but Cathy Smith contacted her physician anyway.

“I have fibromyalgia, which affected the arteries around my heart, resulting in Prinzmetal angina, so I’ve been under the care of a cardiologist for 20 years,” explains Smith. Because Sybil D. Dotson, M.D., sees Smith every six months, she recognized the dizziness and mild chest pain as new symptoms that warranted additional tests.

Smith passed the treadmill part of a nuclear stress test with flying colors, but a coronary blockage was seen on the images taken after the treadmill exercise. This led to angiography, a procedure for injecting dye into the arteries through a small catheter so the inside of the arteries can be seen on X-ray. It showed a 95 percent blockage in the right main artery. “I was told that I was one lucky lady,” says Smith. The plaque blocking her artery was removed during a procedure called angioplasty, and a stent—a small tube—was inserted in the artery to keep it open.

Not sure how much activity was safe following her surgery, Smith asked Dotson about the DeKalb Medical cardiac rehabilitation program described in brochures in the cardiologist’s office. “She approved my participation in the program, so I started the following week.”

The Cardiac Rehabilitation program at DeKalb Medical is a medically supervised program consisting of individualized exercise prescriptions, education and support. The program can benefit people of all ages to help reduce or reverse the progression of heart disease and other heart conditions.

Fast Track to Health

Unlike Smith’s vague symptoms, John Vaughan’s symptoms were clearly heart-related. His arm felt tingly and he didn’t feel well while shopping at Home Depot, but after he got home, he realized he couldn’t lift his arm and he felt like something was pressing on his chest. “I took two aspirin and told my wife we needed to go to the emergency room,” he says.



John Vaughan and his wife signed up for the SilverSneakers program at the Wellness Center after John completed cardiac rehab following a cardiac catheterization.



Once at DeKalb Medical's emergency department, Vaughan simply had to say "chest pain" and a flurry of activity began. "My wife dropped me off at the door and went to park the car. When she came into the ED, I was already in an exam room, hooked up to an EKG and talking with a doctor," says Vaughan.

Because DeKalb Medical's Heart and Vascular Institute is equipped to provide cardiac catheterization, angiography and angioplasty with stent placement, Vaughan was taken immediately into the catheterization lab, where doctors discovered an artery with 100 percent blockage. "I had the procedure and went home about 36 hours later," he says.

Vaughan also went through the cardiac rehab program, which was recommended by his cardiologist, Anthony C. Dorsey, M.D. The rehab program is located in the DeKalb Medical Wellness Center, which made the trip convenient for him and his wife. "My wife came with me on my cardiac rehab days and signed up for an exercise class that was held at the same time," says Vaughan. "When I finished the rehab program, I signed up for the SilverSneakers program so I could continue exercising at the Wellness Center." The wide range of exercise classes for all levels of ability and all ages makes it easy to transition from the cardiac rehab program to a consistent exercise program that includes weights, water aerobics, classes and walking on an indoor track.

At 70 years old, Vaughan has a lot of lessons to share. "My best advice is not to ignore minor pains, take care of yourself and stay active physically and mentally," he says. "Cardiac rehab and exercise at the Wellness Center keep me active physically and mentally because it is a very social environment. My wife and I have met new friends and we're staying healthy."

Hear Cathy Smith and John Vaughan's full stories at www.dekalbmedical.org. Select "Heart and Vascular Services" under "Services," and choose "videos" in the text under the "Welcome to the Heart & Vascular Institute" section at the bottom of the homepage.



HEART TALK

Learn more about heart health at the free seminar presented by DeKalb Medical's Kristi Kinsey-Gotier, M.D., an internal medicine specialist, on December 3. For more information, [see page 13](#).



Cardiac rehab has inspired John Vaughan to maintain a regular exercise routine at the Wellness Center.