

In his own words

Life after a heart attack

Bruce Farrington, 59, Wakefield

I always thought I took pretty good care of myself. Last September, I woke up in the middle of the night and felt a lot of discomfort and tightening in my chest. I wasn't sure what was happening. I got up and started walking around the house, trying to shake it off. I was doing my best to convince myself I wasn't having a heart attack.

Somehow I got through that night and believe it or not I went to work the next day. A day later, to be safe, I made an appointment with Carol Roberts, NP, at the office of my primary care physician Ronald Sen, MD and told her what had happened. Luckily their office was right across the hall from Salil Midha, MD, chief of the Division of Cardiology at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital (MWH). They took me in right away and gave me an echocardiogram. I had an 85 to 90 percent blockage and I had two stents put in by Carl Turissin, MD, interventional cardiologist at MWH. Everything went well with the procedure and I was back home in no time.

My doctors told me that an important part of recovering from a heart attack was going to cardiac rehabilitation. They told me Hallmark Health System (HHS) had a 35-session program. Honestly, I didn't want to go. I came up with every excuse why I shouldn't, trying to convince myself I could do it on my own.

But I went to the first session and they had me. The nurses, therapists and my fellow classmates made it fun. They made you work hard in a safe, monitored environment so you knew you weren't doing yourself any harm. They have the latest equipment so you are getting the most out of the workouts. The staff gave lectures about cardiac care, eating healthy for your heart, how to monitor your heart rate and good strategies on how to take care of yourself. The cardiac rehabilitation center is also close by with plenty of free parking.

There is something about working with other people who have been through the same ordeal. We're all working to get better while living with the apprehensions from surviving a heart attack. We work together and support each other through the sessions. I just kept feeling better and better as I attended all of the 35 sessions, regaining my self-confidence.

I still go back for a few maintenance classes to make sure everything is okay, but I am eating the right foods, walking five times a week and feeling very positive. My wife Gail and daughters, Kara and Kelli, make sure I stay with the program and protect my heart.

For more information on the Cardiac & Endovascular Center or on the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at HHS, visit www.hallmarkhealth.org and select "Programs."

