**Three Years Stronger**

I just re-read my article from this week last year and laughed because it started with getting back on the spinning bike and being reminded by a song that it was by 2-year anniversary from open-heart surgery. This week, I plopped myself back on a spinning bike again for another first time since new-knee surgery and was reminded that my heart could pump very hard and fast making me remember that tomorrow, Feb. 9 is my three-year anniversary of my open-heart surgery.  
  
Thank god my heart still works, because it’s given me a new lease on life that has allowed me the choice of replacing the old crappy knee. For years, I had planned on the only big surgery in my life being a knee replacement. It was slowly getting worse as the years passed. I didn’t take care of my knees when I was younger. I never in a million years, backed with medical proof, lifestyle habits and zero family history, did I suspect I’d have open-heart surgery first.  
  
I was born with bad knees and came from a long history of females with bad knees. I wasn’t born with a bad heart and had no history of bad hearts in my family. So, what’s the take home message here? You just never know!  
  
With this being the beginning of heart month and the beginning of my third trip around the sun with my fixed and stronger than ever heart, I’ve got a few thoughts from my heart journey as well as this new knee journey.  
  
Aren’t we lucky to live in todays world where we can have opportunities for continued life and continued life on new body parts? Just think, how far medical science and medicine has come this century. So, for just that thought alone I am blessed for this three-year anniversary and my seven-week recovery.  
  
I was very lucky to have paid attention to the warning signs. I often think about how long I went feeling the pressure in my chest before I honestly told my doctor about it. I realize now that I am very lucky that I didn’t fall off the spinning bike with a major coronary episode those two months prior to my heart surgery. Yes, if I didn’t admit it in any earlier articles, I lived with and felt the pressure in my chest (the #1 sign of a heart attack) for at least 6 weeks before honestly believing that I needed to get it checked out. It was my doctor who forced the issue and sent me to the cardiologist.  
  
You want to know one very strong reason why I didn’t want to go to the cardiologist? I didn’t want any record of heart concerns on my medical records. No pre-existing stuff allowed on my personal medical records. That was during my ever-increasing health care premiums, a $10,000 deductible and self-employment. I can’t believe that I put my life on the line for a number of weeks because of health care. Don’t do that!  
  
So, know your body and pay attention to changes. The changes can be sudden changes or slow and progressive. In my case it was an increased pressure in the middle of my chest when my heart rate got above 140, which is easy to do on the spinning bike. I ignored it and often forgot about it when class of over, because the pressure went away when my heart rate returned to resting.  
  
Other signs that are very common with heart concerns include; indigestion (often on and off for days/weeks), pressure in your chest/back (like an elephant or monkey sitting on your chest), pain in your chest and/or back, radiating pain through the arms, radiating pain into the neck/jaw, shortness of breath, general malaise (simply not feeling well). The point is, is to know your body and respect that it’s telling you something when these kinds of signs start manifesting.  
  
It’s 2019 and that means you can stop and fix health concerns before they go really bad and cause permanent damage. Pay attention, act when needed and most importantly take care of your body every day with a daily dose of exercise!