

From Heart Problems to Heart Health

It was a normal day for Perry Dyea. He was up early and getting ready to go to work. He felt strange. “I felt a tightness in my chest, a squeezing pressure. I couldn’t breathe.”

Perry went to the clinic. Thirty minutes later he was in an ambulance going to the hospital.

Perry had “unstable angina.” This is when an artery is almost completely blocked. It is like a small heart attack. If not treated, it often becomes a full-blown heart attack. This scared Perry. He changed his eating habits, and started walking. He lost 20 pounds. He did this for five years.

Then he quit exercising. He started gaining weight.

“I guess the fright of the near heart attack wore off,” he explains.

Perry wishes he had kept walking. He wishes he had kept the weight off. When he gained the weight back, he needed to have angioplasty. This is when a balloon is put in an artery near your heart to open it up.

But when the doctor checked him, he discovered

that angioplasty was not enough. Perry needed bypass surgery. He had the surgery and recovered.

Now, Perry is 55 pounds lighter. He eats less food, and walks almost every day. He has only one regret: he wishes he hadn’t gained the weight back. “I believe I would have avoided bypass surgery if I had kept the weight off and kept exercising.”



Perry Dyea (right) says staying happy, being with friends, and exercising are keys to staying healthy. They keep his heart healthy. Daily walking helps him maintain his 55-pound weight loss. “If you exercise, you don’t have to watch your eating so carefully.” Perry is pictured with his friend Ervin Shiosee (Mesita Pueblo).

Tips to a Healthy Heart

How to Prevent Heart Disease



Heart disease is the number one cause of death for Native Americans. It can be prevented by:

- ▶ **Eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.**
- ▶ **Eating fewer foods that are salty, high in fat or fried.**
- ▶ **Being active at least 3-4 times a week.** Try walking. Start with 5-10 minutes and work up to 30 minutes at a time.
- ▶ **Losing weight**, even 10-15 pounds makes a big difference.
- ▶ **Stopping smoking or using tobacco.**
- ▶ **Learning to control stress** rather than letting it control you. Do something that makes you smile every day, like pray, walk in nature and be with people you love.
- ▶ **Checking your blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels** with your doctor.

Signs of a Heart Attack or Heart Disease

Perry did everything right. He went to the clinic right away. Learn the signs of a heart attack. But remember this: Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out. Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives—maybe your own.

The most common heart attack symptom for both men and women is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

- ▶ **Your chest hurts or feels squeezed.**
- ▶ **One or both arms, your back, or stomach may hurt.**
- ▶ **You may feel pain in the neck or jaw.**
- ▶ **You feel like you can't breathe.**
- ▶ **You may feel light-headed or break out in a cold sweat.**
- ▶ **You may feel sick to your stomach.**



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