



Cheryl Gelbmann of Brainerd is back working in her garden after having two stents placed in her coronary arteries.

## DIAGNOSIS TURNS ADVOCATE TO PATIENT

Cheryl Gelbmann never thought a heart attack was in her future.

When she felt some discomfort in her chest, she figured she'd been a little too zealous while weeding her garden or working out with weights.

When she first felt pain radiating down her arms during her daily walk with her husband, she wrote it off to indigestion.

But when the pain continued for several days, she called her family physician, Dr. Peter Dunphy. He scheduled her for a cardiac stress test the next day at the Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center at Essentia Health-St. Joseph's Medical Center.

"I was so sure I was going to pass that stress test because I did what I was supposed to do," Gelbmann recalls. "I have a healthy diet. I exercise every day. I've never smoked."

The 64-year-old Brainerd woman was shocked when she failed the stress test on July 22. "I discounted my dad's genes. I got his curly hair and bad vessels," she says of her family medical history.

Within 30 minutes she was meeting with Dr. Mark Johnson, an experienced cardiologist. He explained her tests and scheduled her for an angiogram on July 25.

During the angiogram, Dr. Johnson found one coronary artery was 90 percent blocked and another was 80 percent blocked. He inserted two stents and Gelbmann spent a night in the hospital before returning home.

"Dr. Johnson said I was just days away from a heart attack," Gelbmann says. "I was very lucky in the timing."

Gelbmann explains that she chose to have her care at Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center because she had confidence in her doctor and the staff. She played a key role in raising the community donations that helped launch the center that's a partnership between Essentia Health and the Central Minnesota Heart Center. She got to know staff as

they were hired and trained on state-of-the-art equipment.

"I had confidence in the experience of my physician and the team taking care of me," Gelbmann says. "I knew they were great before, but I didn't know how great."

- Cheryl Gelbmann

Gelbmann says she found caring and supportive staff that helped her and her family understand each step of her diagnosis and treatment. "When I went in for my stress test, it was stressful but the nurses and technicians explained everything very well," she recalls. "Dr. Johnson was very direct with me and took time to explain what needed to be done to my husband, James, and daughter as well."

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In St. Joseph's Intensive Care Unit, Gelbmann was comforted to discover that she'd known her primary nurse since the woman was a toddler. "She grew up with our son Dan," she says.

Gelbmann says her personal experience has validated her commitment to bringing heart care close to home. She's now doing cardiac rehabilitation at Essentia Health.

"Time is muscle when you're dealing with a heart, so people benefit from immediate care," Gelbmann says. "It also was convenient for me and my husband. He could be with me during the day and go home at night."

Gelbmann admits she has found some irony in her experience. "When I took people on tours of the center, I always said 'You may need this.' I never meant me, I always meant you," she says with a laugh. "I never thought that I'd be using the center. But if my experience can get one person to get his or her cholesterol checked, or go in for a stress test, that's my goal."

## HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS

Most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help.

The American Heart Association says these are signs that you may be having a heart attack:

- Chest discomfort: Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body: Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
- As with men, the most common heart attack symptom for women is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

Learn the signs, but remember this: Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out (tell a doctor about your symptoms). Minutes matter. Fast action can save lives — maybe your own. Don't wait more than five minutes to call 911 or your local emergency response number.

## GET HEART SMART

Find your important heart-health numbers by attending a free heart-screening seminar at the Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center.

Get information and answers to your questions from Dr. Mark Johnson and Dr. Michael Rich, two cardiologists. You'll receive free blood pressure and body mass index (BMI) screenings as well as vouchers for free cholesterol and blood sugar tests.

You can also tour the Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center on the first floor of Essentia Health-St. Joseph's Medical Center, 523 Third St. N. The center is a partnership between Essentia Health and the Central Minnesota Heart Center.

The seminar is offered from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Sept. 27, Nov. 22 and Jan. 24.

To reserve a spot, call 218.828.7455.

## WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH

Rebecca Wirtz, a nurse practitioner from the Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center, will discuss women's heart health from 7-9 p.m. Oct. 11 in the Nisswa Community Center.

It's part of our fall Women's Health Series. Wirtz will share how diet and lifestyle changes can improve your health and also explain non-invasive tests.

To register for the free event, call 218.828.7414 or go to [EssentiaWomensHealth.org](http://EssentiaWomensHealth.org).



## HERE WITH YOU

Cheryl Gelbmann shares her story at [herewithyourstories.org](http://herewithyourstories.org).

You'll also find other patients' stories and videos. You can even share your own story about how Essentia Health has been "Here with you."

If you've got a smartphone, scan the QR code (above) to go to Gelbmann's story.