

# Prim Naegele

## Prim's story

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I really felt great. I didn't have any symptoms leading up to my first initial signs of something not being right. The very first instance that I ever had chest pain was when my 15 year old, got behind the wheel to drive for the first time on a long distance road trip, you know, with her permit, and we switched seats and I suddenly, you know, started getting chest pains and pain in my carotid artery on my left side of my neck. And I thought, you know, that's kind of weird, but kind of blew it off is just anxiety with a new driver and thinking that was it. The next day, as I was putting on makeup, it actually happened again, where I started getting the chest pains, and pain in my neck. And I told my husband about it. And I said "it's just really weird I it the chest pains, I can kind of understand but the neck parts really weird". So he recommended I go see a clinic, go to a clinic and see if I could see a doctor to just make sure everything was okay. And they ran bloodwork, EKG, I had a battery of tests done, all came back perfectly normal. I have no family history of heart disease, I'm not a smoker, my cholesterol is great blood pressure, great. But they recommended that I get a stress test in the next six months or so. So that was that was the, you know, kind of where they left it. And she said she thought it was probably anxiety. So that week, I continued just with my regular routine and having these episodes of chest pain with pain in my neck. And on about three or four days later, I was sitting at a stoplight not stressed at all. And the pain happened again, it happened in my neck, but that time it actually the pain shot down my left arm. And that really scared me because I'd heard stories. So I drove straight into a clinic, where I again got tested for all of the things I've been tested for before plus more. They even did a breathing test to see if I maybe had an infection in my lungs. But everything turned out normal. But thankfully, the doctor just did not feel like it, we should just let it go. So he recommended that I get a stress test. I told him I'd been recommended to get one before but six months or so he said well, I've got to one tomorrow. So I went for my stress test, it came back slightly abnormal. And they recommended that I go to see a cardiologist. So I got in to see him. He said you know, I really think this is nothing but let's go ahead and do a CAT scan. So eight days later, I had a CAT scan done. And that's when we discovered I had 80% blockage of my LAD which is your left anterior descending artery, which is also known as your Widowmaker. And two days later, I had a stent placed. So and I've been great ever since. Really, I was great before other than those chest pains.

## Was your incident related to exertion?

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Not for me. In fact, I was running pretty regularly at that time. And I had even gone on runs during that time and not had any pain during my runs. But I was getting the pain during you know, simple tasks like putting on makeup or sitting at a stoplight.

## Did you have any family history of heart disease?

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No, we have no heart disease in our family. Great cholesterol, low blood pressure. I mean, it really is. It's baffling because I was an anomaly in the cardiac disease area.

# Prim Naegele

What was your initial reaction to the diagnosis?

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Oh my gosh, I'm a walking time bomb. And they said, absolutely you are.

How did your family react to the news?

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You know, my husband was just as shocked as I was. We were very careful about how we told our kids because we didn't want to scare them too bad. And really, everything felt like it happened so fast at that point, that I didn't tell any friends or extended family, the only ones that were aware were my mom and sister and brother and then you know, my immediate family. So but we, you know, it was a very scary time, but also very private. And I just kind of wanted to get through it. And then I could tell people about my story.

Were there a lot of decisions that had to be made at the time?

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Really, I didn't feel like there were any decisions. It was we've got a problem and we've got to get this fixed and the stent was the solution. So that's what we did.

Have you had any other treatments since then?

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No, in fact, I just had a stress test again recently which came back perfect and really good. And he said we'll continue to check periodically to just to make sure that nothing else comes up but yeah, I've been great ever since.

Has this changed your life in any way?

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It has, I'm much more conscious about, you know what I eat, I still have my cheat days and you know, cheat a little more than I should at times, but it does make me think about, you know, if I have a big decision coming up, or if I have something that's really stressful, I try to remember what, prioritize what's really important. It makes me look at things from a little different lens now.

What compels you to share your story?

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I feel like this is a good way to help people maybe listen to their inner voice a little bit more carefully. I know that I felt there was something more than anxiety going on. That just did not seem like it was the correct diagnosis for me just based on my personality. And so that's why I kept digging with, you know, talking to doctors about it and seeing if I could get other opinions because it just did not feel like that was the answer the right answer? And I'm glad that I did.

## Prim Naegele

Do you feel like you were being heard when first seeking help?

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You know, honestly, every doctor that saw me did the right thing, they ran the right tests, they, you know, tried to help me get answers, but everything was coming back, that it wasn't heart disease. So I think the thing that saved me was my inner voice, just telling me that there was something more and to keep pushing.

Why do you feel like listening to your own body is especially important for women?

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You know, women don't just care for themselves, in many cases, or in most cases, I think they're also the ones pushing their husbands to go in to get that spot checked that they've, you know, put off for a long time. And they're the ones making the appointments for their kids. So sometimes women put ourselves at the back on the back burner as far as getting our own issues checked. But, and there are things we can push off a little bit. But when it comes to heart disease, if you've got that chest pain, or a nagging symptom that you just can't pinpoint, it's it's imperative to just keep pushing and get the right answers.

What advice would you share with other women?

7:01

My advice is to know your body and know your numbers. That is something that we've talked about a lot since I've been doing talks with heart disease, and for not just women, but everybody to know, you know, what is your blood pressure? Is it in a good range? What is your cholesterol? You know, there, there are lots of things that you can that are very simple, simple blood tests that we need to know those numbers. And then also listen to that inner voice. If you in the back of your mind thing that doesn't feel right, or that doesn't seem right, continue to press to get to get the answers that you need.

Does this coincide with the work you do at the Laura Bush Institute?

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It does it yes, they're pretty much hand in hand on things like this. I when I came on board with the Laura Bush Institute, I had already had this situation with my heart disease. So it had already taken place. And I really had no idea how my story could be used to help so many women. But I shared it with a few people within our group. And they were like, gosh, that's powerful. And I really have found that the more I share my story, the more that it feels good and it feels like it's empowering both to me and to other women to realize that they can speak up and, and be an advocate for themselves.

You were a busy working mother of three during that event. How did that impact your realization of how serious your condition was?

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My youngest is 11. So she was in the third grade when that happened. And that really was a big eye opener to me to think about how dangerous my heart disease situation was and how much of a ticking time bomb I really was. And especially with her being so young, and you know, how different the outcome could have been if I hadn't, you know, continued to go to try to find answers or have doctors that really listened to me and said, Yeah, something doesn't seem like it's adding up.