

DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF SUDDEN DEATH, HEART FAILURE AND AN IMPLANTED DEVICE

It started when I was 16, and I'm now 56. I was diagnosed with a heart murmur and some years later I had endocarditis and which destroyed the heart valve. When I was 30 I had a valve replaced and I was fine for many many years.

In the early 90s I started developing ventricular tachycardia. I was in hospital more than I was out – it couldn't be controlled and I was in hospital 13 times in 10 months. They tried with drugs and couldn't control it – I could even go into tachycardia at night when I was asleep.

In 1996 I saw the cardiac electrophysiologist, who found out what was wrong straight way and put a defibrillator in on the left hand side – and I was OK, it did control my tachycardia but I still got it and it did go off a couple of times.

Three years ago I had an ablation as it was going off quite a lot. The ablation did stop the defibrillator going off, but I became very weak and last year I couldn't do anything – couldn't walk, had to sit up in bed, couldn't cook a meal, it took me an hour to get dressed and I couldn't walk 10 -20 yards. I came to the end of my tether and I thought this is it- you're a goner!

And then the electrophysiologist decided to put in a biventricular cardiac defibrillator, which they did. I was very ill - they intended to do it in March but at first they couldn't get it fitted on the left hand side and I got a haematoma, which was very painful. They couldn't try on the right until they cured the haematoma – I was in and out of hospital for three months. Then in the November they did it and I've been fine. I can breathe and walk and now I have a life. People don't understand what it's like if you can't walk and cleaning your teeth is an effort and you can't take your socks off. I had a lot of fluid and I was swollen in my legs and I got to the point where I thought nothing could be done and I become very despondent and thought I was going to die. It wasn't an immediate change but within a week I went over the road to get a paper and I couldn't have done that before. Now I can drive and I've been really well since then, I can take my daughter shopping, I can cook and clean the flat. I can do all the things everyone else takes for granted.