

Roslyn Harvey, 62, had always considered herself healthy, so four years ago when she started experiencing shortness of breath when climbing stairs, she didn't think much of it. Then one day she began feeling discomfort in her chest as well, though she didn't connect the two symptoms and assumed she was just having indigestion.

"I certainly didn't think it was my heart," she said.

But Harvey's symptoms began to pile up. The next day she felt a sharp pain in her left shoulder. Later that night she woke up with chest pain again, and the next morning added nausea and vomiting to the list. But she brushed them off and convinced herself that she was on the mend and, still feeling ill, she went about her day.

Finally, she'd had enough. "It was then that I thought, 'I'm going to die, and no one will know,'" she said. Luckily her brother called and she told him that she had a pain in her chest and it wouldn't go away. He immediately took her to the ER. At the hospital Harvey told the nurse her symptoms and she was rushed in for testing.

"I heard someone say, 'We need to get her upstairs now,'" Harvey said. "The rest was a blur."

Finally she was told that she had suffered a heart attack and had complete blockage of one artery and partial blockage of another which required the placement of two stents.

Four years later, Harvey has changed her diet and started exercising regularly. During her recovery she learned that her father and maternal grandfather both died of heart attacks and that her mother and some of her siblings were taking high blood pressure medication. Had she known this, Harvey said she may have recognized her symptoms sooner and acted on them.

Harvey hopes her story encourages others to not only lead a healthy lifestyle but to find out their family history and understand its implications for their health.