

Two years ago, Anne Gallagher was a healthy single mom with two kids. Then the day after Mother's Day in spin class, she fainted. That incident led to a spate of dizzy spells. Gallagher has a family history of heart issues—she had two uncles who died in their 20's from heart disease — so she immediately went to her doctor. She was scanned and tested for blockages, with negative results.

But her symptoms persisted, so Gallagher sought out a specialist and eventually diagnosed her with AV node disease, an electrical issue with the heart.

“I was always a healthful person, exercising and eating right,” Gallagher said. “I would never have predicted what I would be dealt with in this next chapter in my life. One day I'm cycling and going to spinning class and the next day I am fainting off my bike and getting a pacemaker.”

After two years of living with her diagnosis of complete heart block, Gallagher has adjusted to her situation, though her condition is never far from her thoughts.

“I do think about my heart every day and notice the irregular heartbeat and flip flop sensation in my chest, it's my new normal,” she said. “Mostly, I live each day as I did prior to fainting.”

From all she's experienced, Gallagher has plenty of words of wisdom to impart to others about being heart health conscious.

“Know your body and don't overlook any new symptoms or changes in your body,” she said, adding that educating kids, especially young girls, about the symptoms and risk of heart disease is particularly important.

“Early detection can help lead to early diagnosis and treat and cure heart disease,” Gallagher said.