



Faces of CHD | Matt's Story



Meet Matt of Clark's Harbour, NS

Age 46

CHD Diagnosis: Levocardia, sinus inversus of aorta, AV discordance, pulmonary atresia, VSD, Rastelli, Fontan

I've had about 9 or 10 surgeries since I was born. I had my first surgery at 6 months when they put in a shunt. I had the big surgery when I was about 13 years old, when they did ASD and VSD repair, and Rastelli, I was in the hospital for 2 months and another surgery at 15. Then when I was 18 I was sent to Boston to have a Clamshell device put in as it hadn't been approved in Canada yet, Nova Scotia healthcare paid for that surgery. My last surgery was 3 years ago, after I had been ill for some time and my liver started to become affected. They replaced the Rastelli with a human aorta. I have felt great ever since, like I was 16 again and better than ever felt in my whole life!

The hardest part for me is that when you are sick, everything is affected. Your ability to do things on your own, sometimes you have to ask for help and that can be hard or embarrassing. Also, your mental health starts to suffer, you worry, get depressed, start to think about how long you're going to live and if you will survive the surgery. Then after you recover from the surgery, you feel great, like you can take on the world.

The best advice I have I ever got was one time I was in the hospital with an older gentleman and he told me to do whatever I want, find a way to to achieve it and not to stress over the details. That's how I've tried to live my life, do what I can and if I fail that's ok, but keep moving forward. I've always tried to be grateful and remember that someone can always have it worse. Also be compliant with your treatment and follow up, always go to your appointments and ask questions.

The best source of medical information has always been my cardiologists. The web has too much information, can be overwhelming and not always trustworthy.

I am grateful for the time I've had to spend with family. I have a great family and had a great childhood. I've enjoyed life and am thankful and happy to be alive.