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## February's American Heart Month sparks awareness

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Larry Edelson never had any major health issues until about eight weeks ago. The 68-year-old Delray Beach resident was vacationing in Napa Valley when he was rushed to the emergency room for a heart attack. He's sharing his story during February for American Heart Month to bring awareness to heart health and to prompt others not to wait on getting medical attention if something doesn't feel right.



LIEBERMAN

Edelson's wine country vacation began checking out the scenery and having a meal.

"I was eating dinner and later thought I had indigestion," he said. "Then at 5 a.m., I woke up feeling tremendous pressure on top of my chest. I knew I was hav-

ing a cardiac episode."

In an unfamiliar surrounding, Edelson was frightened of where he'd up but he was taken to a local emergency room and underwent surgery for two stents.

"While this was happening, my son called my cardiologist, Eric Lieberman, at Delray Medical Center and was sending him pictures of my cardiogram. I'm very thankful for his help while I was in California and then later when I returned home."

An avid runner, scuba diver, golf-

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er and pilot, Edelson never saw the danger of cardiac arrest coming.

“The single thing I realized from this whole frightening episode is if the pain doesn’t subside immediately, do not wait to go to the emergency room,” he said. “Dr. Lieberman said the only reason I recovered so well is because I was treated so quickly. Listen to your body. Don’t wait.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 600,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year. It’s the leading cause of

death for both men and women.

“There are many risk factors for heart disease,” Dr. Lieberman said. “Family history, smoking and diabetes are all factors along with hypertension and elevated cholesterol.”

He cited smoking as the biggest issue with cardiovascular disease.

“It’s one of my major points of discussion with patients,” he said. “Patients who quit smoking reduce their risk for heart disease. Obesity is another factor.”

The country club lifestyle that involves frequently eating at restaurants is one many South

Florida residents have adopted.

“This can put weight on fast,” Dr. Lieberman said. “We encourage regular exercise of at least 20 minutes of activity a day. More is always better when it comes to exercise.”

Women are also more at risk for heart disease post menopause, he said. Estrogen declines and the body undergoes other changes.

“It’s very important to understand that once a woman goes through menopause, in six months to a year, her risk for heart disease goes up to that of a man’s risk,” he said.