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Article by: Joseph P. Galichia, MD, FACC

*Interventional Cardiologist*

Galichia Medical Group, PA

316-684-3838 / 800-657-7250

[www.galichia.com](http://www.galichia.com)

## **AFTER THE CARDIAC EVENT**

For thousands of Americans, the first time they are diagnosed with cardiovascular disease is at a time of acute physiological trauma: a heart attack, stroke or other major event. As much as the healthcare industry has been working to educate the public about disease prevention, risk factors and symptomology, there are still plenty of people who believe “it couldn’t happen to me.” Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer in this country, but due to increased technological advances and more informed patients, the morbidity rate has decreased. Therefore, the bypass or stent that you receive to treat disease can mean an extended life full of enjoyment and activity.

As with any major physiological occurrence, there are things to watch out for after the fact. Make sure to consult with your physician and get answers to your questions, especially about medications and how to take them. Many people who discover they have cardiovascular disease see great benefit from various pharmaceuticals, including anti-statin drugs, blood pressure meds, anti-coagulents, beta-blockers, etc. But these need to be taken as directed and any side effects discussed. If any kind of cardiac rehabilitation, follow-up testing or additional tests are recommended or prescribed by your physician, it’s crucial to follow that advice.

Another aspect of living well with cardiovascular disease comes from lifestyle changes. Heart disease can be known as a “silent killer,” due to its sometimes asymptomatic nature, or the fact that some symptoms can be attributed to other phenomena. One thing I encourage my patients to do straight away is to recognize the changes in their habits will make for increased longevity. So, any weight that they can lose is a plus, quitting smoking is always a plus and adjusting diet and nutrition intake can make major differences in their quality of life. A monitored increase in exercise is encouraged, as is better quality sleep. A physician will be able to tailor a very precise treatment to your particular needs.

After a diagnosis of heart disease is made, especially due to a heart attack, or other life-threatening cardiac event, I encourage my patients to act with vigilance about their health. All of us need to listen to the wisdom of our bodies more closely, and patients with heart disease are no exception. Many people report side effects/symptoms (i.e., changes in breathing, pain or other sensations) before any test finding comes back at all. I encourage this self-monitoring because some changes and symptoms are subtle but imperative to address in order to maintain optimal health. When I have patients who are very engaged in their health, it makes it that much more collaborative when I work with them to find solutions.

Lastly, there are recent studies linking post-cardiac events (and cardiovascular disease in general) to depression. This is a common occurrence, but definitely not one that should go unmentioned to your

physician. There are many treatments for depression that can be worked through, and many solutions to be explored.

Living life with cardiovascular disease can be exactly that: living life well-exercised and well-nourished, with happiness, gusto and balance. Life is an adventure to be lived, with loved ones, favorite hobbies and curiosity about new things around every corner. Many find this diagnosis to be a “wake-up call” to discover different aspects of their health and dormant aspects of their personalities. In other words, working with the diagnosis can be a perfect time to start taking your health to heart.

Listen to Dr. Galichia’s Radio Show – “Take Your Health to Heart” every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to [\*\*GalichiaRadio@Galichia.com\*\*](mailto:GalichiaRadio@Galichia.com). We would love to hear from you!!!

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