

"Just take time to get checked. Heart problems do lots of damage while we're second-guessing ourselves."

KAREN, PATIENT

HEART ATTACK HEALTHY AGAIN

Karen has a family history of heart disease, but no obvious risks herself. The 52-year-old environmental scientist and mom loves hiking, kayaking and yoga, and doesn't have high blood pressure or cholesterol. So a heart attack wasn't top-of-mind when she experienced mild pressure in her chest plus pressure in her neck, ears, jaw and arm.

But intense exhaustion led Karen to the hospital — and nationally known cardiologist Amparo Villablanca now oversees her recovery from Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection or SCAD, which is more common in women and affected by stress. Villablanca leads the UC Davis Women's Cardiovascular Medicine Program, which provides state-of-the-art care in an innovative, supportive setting.

Today Karen has regular heart checkups, practices mindfulness and gratitude, and is back to living her healthy life to the fullest.

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