

# My Strokes

- Chris Banting's story

*Chris Banting had two strokes when he was 29-years-old, the latter of which was near fatal. This has affected the right side of his body, his memory, speech and behaviour. Here, he explains how AF affected him.*



For about six months prior to my strokes, every now and again my heart would race up to 220bpm, sometimes for a few minutes, sometimes for hours. For the first five months I didn't go and see the GP, which was silly of me, but I thought it would pass.

After five months, I finally decided to see a GP and he referred me to a heart specialist in hospital, but before I saw him, I had two strokes in February 2010 when I was 29 years old – three days apart. The latter stroke was so severe (which is a bleed to the brain) that for two days it was touch and go whether I would survive or not, but I did!

The strokes damaged the left side of the brain so my right side of my body was affected especially my arm and leg, and it also affected my speech, memory and fatigue resistance. I have aphasia; a communication problem, so to begin with I could hardly speak any words and reading and writing was really difficult. My speech is very good now providing I have notes to read from. If I didn't have notes, I would still struggle.

I found out I had a heart condition after extensive tests post stroke. It's called atrial flutter/fibrillation (AF), which is an abnormal heart rhythm usually associated with an irregular and fast heart rate. Over 2010-2012, I've been in hospital many times with AF and had two ablations, a pacemaker fitted, and a cardioversion, which is basically an electronic shock to the heart. Since January 2012, my heart has been steady and hopefully it will be steady for life. If it comes back, then I will go to the A&E department straight away!

I'm still positive and I'm still improving even now.

The first stage of my recovery after being discharged from hospital was physiotherapy and speech and language therapy, plus the Life After Stroke programme at The Prestbury Centre. This was really beneficial and I thank everyone at the Centre who was involved.

The next stage of recovery was my leg gadget. I've got "dropped-foot" which means my foot turns to one side so I can't really walk unless I've got an aid to help me. So I'm using a leg gadget, called *WalkAide*, which is an electronic way of nerve stimulation to turn my foot back to the correct position. My walking is a lot straighter and faster – I'm still limping slightly but it's getting better all the time.

*I found out I had a heart condition after extensive tests post-stroke*

Next I went to The Stroke Association and they told me about a new stroke club – for younger stroke survivors. So I went to the first meeting and it was really interesting to hear different people's stories, so now I go every month and meet for a couple of hours. It's really good!

## ***My life now is very different to pre-strokes, but I'm living life to the fullest***

I established a company called *Inspired Mobility Limited*, which sold disability goods on the Internet. It boosted my brain again and helped me with speaking on the phone to customers and suppliers. It was really good for a year but one thing I was missing was people – because it was just me and my laptop. I now work at *Young Gloucestershire*, a charity, and it's given me more confidence to do more things.

I used to go to *Headway*, a brain injury charity organisation, to help me with confidence and life skills through a communication group and an Understanding Brain Injury course. Also, because I've only got one functional arm, I had cookery and woodwork lessons which helped me as I live on my own.

I'm volunteering at The Stroke Association doing admin and talking to other stroke survivors. I'm still doing arm exercises at home to strengthen my arm for everyday activities.

I can drive again as well. It's an automatic car with a gadget called a *SmartSteer* which fits onto the steering wheel, so I can steer my car with one hand.

I've also got some medication to help me post-stroke – Warfarin, which thins the blood to help prevent clots again, beta-blockers - to control my heart rhythm and statins – to control my cholesterol.

I've set-up [www.mystroke.co.uk](http://www.mystroke.co.uk) to help other people who've had a stroke, their family or carers or people who want to find out more information on strokes. There are stroke articles, stroke videos, a directory, charities, news and much more.

My life now is very different to pre-strokes, but I'm living life to the fullest – I've been rock climbing (one-handed), kayaking, riding a bike and I've been to Las Vegas in June 2013!!

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