



“I don’t want to be the next one who dies from a heart attack... I plan to live to 99”

After losing so many loved ones to heart disease, **Catherine Lloyd** is determined not to follow in their wake. Here, the 72-year-old tells *Body+Soul* how she’s rewriting her family history – and how you can do it, too

My dad was a very strong and stubborn man. He never thought anything was wrong with his health, but because he’d lost so many siblings to heart disease, I was always nagging him about eating healthier. Three of my uncles died from heart disease in their 50s and one of my aunts died at 62.

So it wasn’t a surprise to me when Dad suffered a heart attack at 65. He had been out washing his truck when he got terrible chest pains and started to vomit, but thankfully someone realised what was happening and called an ambulance. Although we were told the first heart attack should have killed him, he didn’t pass away until his third one at 75 – making him the fifth sibling out of 10 to pass away from the condition.

After losing so many people to heart disease, I just didn’t want anyone else to die. Then, around 18 months ago, my ex-husband, Ray, who I’m still close to, suffered a heart attack and needed a triple bypass.

Just like my dad, he didn’t think there was anything wrong with his health. He’s very slim, so he didn’t think he’d ever have a heart attack, but when we separated, he started eating a lot of sweets and takeaway meals, and I think that contributed to his heart problems.

My dad’s diet let him down, too, and although my uncles weren’t overweight when they died, they all drank, had too much stress, ate a lot of rich foods and they were all smokers, which I think played a big part.

Losing so many people to heart disease has had a profound effect on me. When I was younger, after my uncles passed away, any time I’d feel a niggle, I’d think it was a heart attack. At one stage, every time the phone rang late at night or early in the morning I thought, oh, here goes another one – another death from heart disease.

My son, Greg, and his family recently returned to Australia after living in the UK, and when I first saw him, I got such

a shock because of the weight he’d put on while in lockdown. He’s started going for long walks to lose the weight, but if he’s gone for longer than I think he should be, I listen out for the ambulance sirens because I think he’s had a heart attack.

Before my dad passed away we had started eating healthier and become more aware of our diet and lifestyle. Now, because I’ve had so many family members die from heart disease, I do a lot of research into the condition and ways to prevent it.

Recently, I had substantial tests done due to a pain in my left arm, and because of my family history, the doctors

“Any time I’d feel a niggle, I’d think it was a heart attack”

were really worried. Thankfully, the cardiologist said he was amazed at how healthy my heart is, and I think that’s because of my lifestyle.

It’s your responsibility to look after yourself. It doesn’t mean you can’t have a good time, but enjoy things in moderation. Your life is in your hands, so go to the doctors, have your regular

check-ups and keep a positive attitude. I don’t drink a lot, I’ve never smoked, I don’t eat fatty or processed foods; I do eat lots of wholefoods, fruits and veggies. I don’t want to be the next one in the family to suddenly drop dead from a heart attack – I plan to live to 99. • For more information on heart disease and to donate, visit heartresearch.com.au.



IN YOUR HANDS
Catherine Lloyd says enjoying things in moderation and having regular check-ups have been key to maintaining her heart health.

THE ULTIMATE HEART HEALTH GUIDE

Cardiologist Dr Edward Barin reveals the four pillars (or 4Ms) of a healthy heart

+ GET MOVING
Exercise has many benefits beyond simple fitness and flexibility. It stimulates the body’s immune system, reduces blood thickening so it clots less easily, improves brain function and lowers blood pressure.

+ WATCH YOUR MEALS
Good nutrition extends beyond just controlling

your intake of cholesterol, calories and chocolate. There’s also great benefit in understanding, for example, the important effects of trans fats (bad for you) and polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats (good for you).

+ KNOW YOUR MEASUREMENTS
Keep track of your health measurements. This includes cholesterol levels, blood pressure, weight, sugar levels, waist circumference and exercise capacity.

+ FOCUS ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH
Important risk factors that may lead to heart disease include stress, anger and depression. When it comes to causing heart disease, these can be as damaging as high cholesterol levels. Conversely, a positive state of mind, a supportive community and personal happiness may help to reduce the risk of a bad cardiovascular event.

Remember it as the “Move, Meals, Measurement, Mental” approach.



Mel Schilling
RELATIONSHIP EXPERT

I met sexologist Alessandra Rampolla, my fellow expert on Married At First Sight, on the first day of filming. I was excited and nervous to meet her – like a first date! We’d talked via FaceTime in hotel quarantine but not met. **The stakes were high as we needed to instantly connect, then step on camera together and make it look effortless.** She’s a

native Spanish-speaker from Puerto Rico, our worlds were so different; what if we didn’t get each other? I needn’t have worried as we instantly hugged like old mates and launched into the first of many animated, intense, hilarious conversations. **Alessa (my name for her) and I have so much in common.** We’ve shared some of our deepest secrets about

growing up, discovering ourselves and our journey into womanhood. Obviously we talk about sex a lot. We both share a feminist outlook on life and have similar views about women, relationships, power and communication. She’s introduced me to her sensational Latina music and we often have a dance and a coffee while having our hair and make-up done.

Some of my favourite moments on set with Alessa have involved decoding Aussie slang. Sometimes she gets this look when one of our brides or grooms uses a slang word, and I know she needs help. I’ve been known to offer detailed definitions of words like “pash” and “flog” on camera, often resulting in fits of laughter from the

participants and crew. **In a world where women are often pitted against each other, it’s so refreshing to work with a genuine peer.** Alessa and I have deep respect for each other – we are each other’s cheerleaders. I’m so grateful for her friendship. • **MAFS 2022 airs Sunday at 7pm and Monday-Thursday at 7.30pm on the Nine Network.**