“I remember the paramedics calling me a ‘status one', I knew it was serious. I was in trouble.”



Adam and his partner, Cindy, had driven down from their home in Puhoi, north of Auckland, to spend the day celebrating with family. As soon as they arrived, Adam’s son, Isaac, asked him to pop down to the local dairy—just 500 meters away—to pick up ice and lemonade for the party. Adam hopped into his car and drove to the shop.

After grabbing what he needed, he put the ice in the back of his vehicle but suddenly felt dizzy. He tried to sit down but fell to the ground instead.

A bystander quickly called 111 for help.

Meanwhile, Isaac realised they needed something else and cycled to the dairy. When he arrived, he saw his dad on the ground. Panicked, he rushed back home to alert the family. They all arrived back at the dairy just as an ambulance pulled up.

Adam briefly regained consciousness, asking bystanders to help him sit up. But moments later, he lost consciousness again. It turned out that Adam's heart had stopped due to a blockage in its electrical system, causing him to faint and eventually go into cardiac arrest.

Paramedics transported Adam to nearby Te Puru School, where a rescue helicopter was able to land.

"I remember the paramedics calling me a 'status one,'" Adam recalls. "From my experience as a first responder, I knew it was serious. I was in trouble."

To stabilise him for the flight to Auckland Hospital, Adam was placed in a medically induced coma. Cindy vividly remembers the terrifying moment she asked the flight doctors if Adam would survive. "They said they weren't sure. I was told to say goodbye to him."

While Adam was airlifted to Auckland, Cindy and Isaac had an emotional drive to the hospital from Thames which is about an hour and a half , where Adam's brother, Dean, met them.

At the hospital, Adam underwent surgery. He had a pacemaker installed and later a triple bypass. His family prepared for the worst, unsure of what condition his brain might be in—if he woke up at all.

But the next morning, Adam opened his eyes and looked up at the hospital ceiling. "I remember thinking, 'That wasn't a dream,'" he says. Despite having tubes down his throat, Adam asked the nurses to take them out. "I was starving! I asked them when breakfast was".

Cindy got the call she had been hoping for. "When they told me Adam was not only awake but talking and asking for food, I knew he was going to be okay. I just burst into tears."

Over the next two and a half months in the hospital, Cindy came to think of the doctors, nurses, and paramedics as their "angels." She credits New Zealand's "amazing" healthcare system with saving Adam's life.

Adam and Cindy's story stretches back to when they were 11 years old in intermediate school, where Adam had a crush on her. They lost touch over the years but reconnected in their early 50s.

After his release from the hospital, Adam knew he wanted to make the most of life. He

proposed to Cindy, and they were soon married. The couple went on a European honeymoon, celebrating both their love and Adam's second chance at life.

Adam is thankful to keep living.