

Specialized heart surgery gives Florida father hope for future

Video	Audio
Eric Salter Patient	<p>"We thought I was in great shape — the best shape of my life."</p> <p>"I didn't have any symptoms that would tell me that I had this ticking time bomb inside."</p>
	<p>Eric Salter went from living an active, healthy life to facing a life-threatening medical emergency, where he found himself having just minutes to say goodbye to his family before emergency surgery.</p>
Madelen Salter Eric's Wife	<p>"It's a nightmare. I just remember falling to the floor by his bed, and we prayed."</p>
	<p>Eric suffered an aortic dissection, which is a tear in the inner layer of the large blood vessel branching off from the heart, and he underwent emergency surgery to repair the tear.</p> <p>Doctors told him a bicuspid valve issue had likely caused the dissection.</p> <p>After the surgery ...</p>
Eric Salter	<p>"... I was given the impression that I was 'fixed.' That was a term that was used a lot — and to go live my life. Go live life."</p>
	<p>But after joining an online community for aortic dissection survivors, Eric and his wife, Madelen, became concerned about the future.</p>
Eric Salter	<p>"They were aortic dissection survivors, but they were being told different things and had a different treatment plan than I did."</p>
	<p>Seven months after his surgery, Eric decided to get a second opinion at Mayo Clinic in Florida.</p>
Eric Salter	<p>"I went in and met with Dr. Phillips, and I thought we were just going to have a casual conversation."</p>
Sabrina Phillips, M.D. Cardiovascular Disease Mayo Clinic	<p>"My initial question to him was, 'Well, when was your last CT scan?' And he told me, it was in the hospital."</p>

Eric Salter	"She scheduled a CT scan for me immediately."
	Dr. Phillips explained that it's important patients like Eric have follow-up CT scans three months post-surgery. Eric's last scan had been more than six months prior.
	Eric's scan at Mayo showed a small outpouching had developed around the surgical repair site, called a pseudoaneurysm, which needed to be monitored to make sure it didn't grow over time.
Dr. Phillips	"This is the pseudoaneurysm that grew rapidly, and you see that the size is almost the size of his aorta. So, this is very, very large and was a significant concern for rupture."
	A rupture could be fatal. So, Dr. Phillips advised additional surgery. Because time was of the essence, Eric opted to travel to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where aortic surgeon Dr. Alberto Pochettino could perform the repair.
Eric Salter	"I was getting back to normal life."
	But he was, once again, facing a critical surgery.
Eric Salter	"It was extremely difficult. Scary. Yeah, very scary."
	In Rochester, Dr. Pochettino performed a complex, 14-hour procedure to fix the immediate area of concern, which included revising the entire ascending aorta graft from Eric's previous surgery.
Dr. Phillips	"Eric did very well with this complicated surgery."
	Dr. Phillips says they will continue to monitor Eric's repaired aorta, as more surgery may be required.
Dr. Phillips	"Over time, it is possible that that area of the aorta will expand and would expand to a degree that would make it dangerous in terms of risk of rupture. And if that were to occur, we would need to have Eric go back to the operating room for an even more complicated procedure to repair this descending thoracic aorta."
	And while Eric says the thought of another surgery is scary, if that time comes ...
Eric Salter	"... I am confident that they'll do their job."

	That confidence is allowing him to focus on the important things in his life and not spend time worrying about the "what ifs."
Eric Salter	"I keep reminding myself there's 1,440 minutes in a day. Take advantage of all of them."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm DeeDee Stiepan.