

Former bobby's heartfelt appeal



Recovering: Retired PC Martin Andrews, who has arterial fibrillation, and inset, heart nurse Melloney Ferrar. Photo: Steve Parkin

A RETIRED policeman whose heart has been restarted five times is backing the South Yorkshire Heart Appeal.

Martin Andrews, aged 58, was diagnosed with arterial fibrillation, which gives his heart an irregular beat, five years ago.

Since then the grandfather-of-four has gone into hospital five times to have his heart jolted into the right rhythm using an electric shock, a procedure called cardioversion.

"It's nothing really," said Martin, who works as a part-time detention officer after retiring as a PC.

"It is very simple – you just get put to sleep with a general anaesthetic while they restart your heart.

"It only takes a few minutes. You don't even have to stay in overnight."

Martin, who lives with

by **BEN SPENCER**
Health Reporter

his wife Susan, 54, in Swinton, Rotherham, last underwent the procedure a fortnight ago, at the Northern General Hospital's Cardiothoracic Centre.

"Having an irregular heartbeat makes you feel out of breath and tired because the heart can't get enough oxygen into your blood," he said.

"At the moment I feel great, because my heart is beating normally. In the past the effect has not lasted long, but I hope this time it will be permanent."

Martin knows he is lucky his condition was diagnosed. Arterial fibrillation is one of the biggest causes of stroke, and sometimes it is hard to spot because in some people there are no symptoms

except an irregular pulse.

Nurse specialist Melloney Ferrar, who treated Martin, wants more people to check their pulse on a regular basis.

Melloney, arrhythmia care co-ordinator at the Northern General's cardiac rhythm management service, said spotting an irregular pulse early could save a person's life.

"If you feel that your pulse might be irregular you should visit your GP," she said.

Martin added: "I was lucky. Before I was diagnosed I was feeling tired and rundown but I put it down to a pre-existing thyroid problem. Luckily I spoke to my GP."

To donate to the South Yorkshire Heart Appeal, which part-funds the Cardiothoracic Centre, call 0114 2263517.

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- To assess your resting pulse rate, sit down for five minutes beforehand.
- Take off your watch and hold your left or right hand out with your palm facing up and your elbow slightly bent.
- With your other hand, place your index and middle fingers on your wrist, at the base of your thumb. Your fingers should sit between the bone and the tendon.
- If your pulse feels like it is jumping around, speak to your GP.
- Log-on to www.knowyourpulse.org for more advice and a video about how to accurately check your pulse.