

Newslocal > Manly Daily

# Peter Goes survives burst aorta, thanks to incredible efforts by Northern Beaches Hospital

He has been hit by a bus, went under the back wheels of a five-tonne truck and beaten melanoma. But surviving a burst aorta is Peter Goes' luckiest escape yet.



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Around 90 per cent of people who suffer a burst aorta are dead before they get to hospital.

But against all the odds, Peter Goes, 67, who was cycling in Bayview when the main artery to his heart ruptured, is alive thanks to the incredible efforts of paramedics who were first on the scene and then doctors at Northern Beaches Hospital.

Mr Goes, of North Steyne, Manly, said he was full of gratitude to those who worked so hard to save his life.

But he said it wasn't the first time he had stared death in the face.

Aged four he was hit by a bus in Rotterdam, bounced, and got up without any injuries.

When he was nine he was run over by a five-tonne milk truck which shattered his pelvis in 16 places and is held together with gold wire.



Peter Goes, 67, with Michelle Harvey, 59, of North Steyne, Manly. Mr Goes proposed to his partner of 20 years after surviving a burst aorta against the odds. Pictured at Northern Beaches Hospital.

Then in his 40s he discovered a melanoma on his back and then a second one on his shoulder.

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Then in his 40s he discovered a melanoma on his back and then a second one on his shoulder.

He went on to beat cancer.

“I’ve stared death in the face many times but I seem to always pull out the lucky straw,” he said.

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This latest incident was his closest shave yet and spurred Mr Goes into proposing to Michelle Harvey, his partner of 20 years, while still in hospital. She said yes.

“I’m obviously a bit of a slow mover,” he said.

“I love Michelle dearly, she’s the only woman in my life.

“Something like this makes you wonder how many chances there are to cement what we have.

“Even my ex-wife said I should have proposed to Michelle 15 years ago.”



Dr Emily Granger with Northern Beaches Hospital patient Peter Goes. He suffered a burst aorta and underwent a six-hour operation where his heart stopped three times.

Mr Goes latest scrape with death was on May 15, when he was riding his regular 50km cycle route with his two mates.

During the ride he collapsed and his mates could tell he was in terrible trouble and called Triple-0.

Paramedics arrived in five minutes and took him to the Frenchs Forest hospital where by luck one of Australia's top cardiothoracic and transplant surgeons, Dr Emily Granger was doing her ward rounds.

After staff in the Emergency Department stabilised Mr Goes, he was taken to theatre where he was put on a heart bypass machine and the team – which included 12 nurses, four anaesthetists and two cardiac surgeons – then worked tirelessly for six hours to repair his heart.



Peter Goes in the Emergency Department at Northern Beaches Hospital who suffered a burst aorta on May 15 and against the odds survived. Picture: Supplied.

During that time he died three times on the table and had to be resuscitated.

He was then taken to Intensive Care where he spent two days in an induced coma.

Dr Granger said the hospital's team did a superb job to save Mr Goes' life.

"He's a very lucky guy. This type of rupture is usually fatal. Many people simply don't make it to hospital on time and many can't be saved in the Emergency Department despite best efforts," Dr Granger said.

"His heart stopped three times but the team pulled together beautifully to save his life."



All hands on deck in the Emergency Department after Peter Goes suffers a burst aorta. Picture: Supplied.

Emergency Department specialist, Dr Brian Burns said this case was an extraordinary effort which will be used as an educational tool for clinical teams.

“This would be challenging to any tertiary hospital in Sydney,” Dr Burns said.

“It was a Saturday, Mr Goes came in essentially cardiac arrest and he managed to get to theatre and have a team ready who managed to save his life and he’s here today. That is why we do what we do.

“This I would call a transformational case. A case like this can change a system to help ensure that it works every day for all patients.”



The team battle for six hours to repair Peter Goes' heart. He died three times on the operating table and needed to be resuscitated. Picture: Supplied.

Mr Goes praised everyone who helped save his life, in particular Dr Burns and Dr Granger.

"I feel like I have a second chance," he said.

"Dr Granger said my heart had stopped a couple of times. Everything from the ambulance officers to the Emergency Department, to theatres and ICU lined up for me perfectly to save my life. It could have been a very different outcome.



Peter Goes, 67, survived a burst aorta against all the odds. Pictured here at Northern Beaches Hospital with nurse Melissa Graham, and intensive care paramedics Dave Rigby and Peter Knoechel.

“I have the utmost gratitude. This is a young hospital and yet it has all these amazingly, talented people like Dr Granger and Dr Burns. I’ve had a constant stream of staff visiting to check in on how I’m going.”

Among those who have visited are the paramedics Dave Rigby and Peter Knoechel who said they just needed to see him in person, because they couldn’t believe he had survived.

Mr Goes, who is due to leave hospital on Wednesday, two weeks after the incident, has been told he will need rehabilitation, but will most likely be able to get back on his bike by Christmas.



Dr Brian Burns with patients Peter Goes and ED nurses Frances Groves and Emma Ives at Northern Beaches Hospital.

He said the wedding will have to wait until his son, who flew from Canada to be by his bedside, is able to fly over again.

He has two children with his previous partner and shares two with Ms Harvey.



He has two children with his previous partner and shares two with Ms Harvey.

He said he had lived a lucky life, tried to have the most fun possible and to be a “decent chap”.

“I’ve survived against the odds and I don’t want any regrets going forward,” he said.

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