

Heat and high humidity brought this patient's heart issue to light

Women often experience heart symptoms differently than men, Harbin Clinic cardiologist says

CARTERSVILLE, GA., Sept. 24, 2026 – Joann Boozer took advantage of warm, sunny days to tackle a task she'd had on her mind for a while — clean out the garage, but as the temperatures heated up, the Cartersville resident found that she was tiring more easily. On the hottest days, she sometimes felt a tightness in her chest.

"It was fine to begin with," Boozer said. "When I started doing it the weather was very nice, and then it wound up getting hotter and hotter."

As temperatures climbed, so did Boozer's fatigue and the tightness in her chest.

"I didn't have chest pains, I was just very, very tight chested," she said. "It had been going on for a couple of months, but I didn't recognize what was happening or realize that I needed to do something about it."

"I kind of suspected something, but I didn't ever really have any chest pains, just tightness, and I wasn't really short of breath," she said.

She ultimately decided to talk to her doctor about what she was experiencing.

"I think it probably made my mind up for me, when I knew how I felt working in the conditions I was working under — in the garage, getting hot," Boozer said. "I thought you need to go to the doctor and have this checked out."

Listening to her body and following that instinct was exactly the right call. Harbin Clinic's Dr. Maxwell Prempeh is her cardiologist. Harbin Clinic and Atrium Health Floyd are part of Advocate Health.

"Mrs. Boozer came to me with complaints of dizziness and fatigue, with no other symptoms," said Dr. Prempeh. Her calcium score was 889, placing her in the high-risk category for cardiovascular disease. Her cholesterol and blood pressure were controlled and a stress test indicated no issues. Still, due to the nature of her complaints, Dr. Prempeh ordered more tests.

"Because of her fatigue, I was still concerned about her," he said.

More testing revealed some moderate to severe disease that could be related to Boozer's symptoms, so Dr. Prempeh performed a cardiac catheterization that revealed three arterial blockages. She received three stents in July and immediately started feeling better.

Boozer's symptoms are considered atypical but are not uncommon to women with heart disease.

"We see in females that their symptoms don't always present typically," Dr. Prempeh said. "They have sort of atypical symptoms, not the classic chest pain or crushing sensation."

Her symptoms were exacerbated by working outside in the heat and humidity, he said.

Individuals with cardiovascular disease should take extra precautions when working outside in hot weather, Dr. Prempeh said. The heart is already working harder due to exertion. Heat and humidity further tax the cardiovascular system, affecting blood pressure, hydration and electrolytes.

"The heat will create extra exertion for you," Dr. Prempeh said. And that means being aware of how you are reacting to the heat. If you have heart disease and you are exerting yourself and feel more symptoms than usual, you should rest and seek cardiology attention."

"This had been going on for a couple of months," Boozer said. "I just didn't recognize that I needed to do something about it."

Now, Boozer is attending cardiac rehabilitation, following her doctor's orders and returning to the things she enjoys.

"I'm not a sitter," she said. "I'm on the go from the moment I wake up until I go to bed. I plan to continue to be on the go."

And that, she said, is due to her paying attention to the signals her body was sending her and to her attentive cardiologist.

"He is wonderful," she said. "He is really good."

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