

# Quarantine During a Pandemic is a Perfectly Normal Time for Your Heart to Freak Out



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A few weeks ago during [gestures wildly] my heart starting freaking out. What was I doing at the time?

What am ever doing in quarantine:

-Taking a shower

-Walking the dog

-Working outside on the patio (this is most of my life)

-Laundry; Cooking; Dishes;

-Lying inside on the couch, doing a crossword while watching an episode of Bones.

-Standing in the kitchen eating something over the sink b/c I already have enough plates to wash

So, I was doing one of those things when I suddenly became: very aware of my heartbeat,

Normal

I did: nothing.

I ignored it and went on to other things, but then it happened again, and kept happening. A weird jumpiness in my chest. A soft pain inside me that felt like pressing on a bruise. I realized my heart was skipping beats. It would beat seven times in a row and then leave a sudden, looming gap where the eighth beat should be. Then the ninth and tenth would arrive- larger, throbbing heavily to compensate.

This kept happening, over and over again, every few minutes, for days.

Sometimes it woke me up in the middle of the night: a sudden, solid knock on the wall of my chest saying *hey n du wld*. I would lie in the dark, counting the

-dropped beats, unable to fall back asleep.

I record it: fluttering, beat skipping. Duration: Less than 10 minutes.

Anyways. This kept happening. Every few minutes, all day long and most of the night.

[Friends: in the interest of space we now fast forward past a bunch of minor but annoying health care hurdles related to my trying to get professional advice on what to do. A visit to a clinic that was so thoroughly "COVID-safe"""" it felt like trying to access the Pentagon. A bunch of tests from which I learned nothing despite the fact that they cost me a lot of very real money. A bunch of waiting. Emails & phone calls that were never returned. A visit to a different clinic that did *not* feel like trying to access the Pentagon but instead felt like a visit to a magical land called *Hey Let's All Definitely Get COVID*. Like that, for days, and then we finally arrive at me getting

The monitor looks like a digital watch from the 80s and a Band-Aid had a baby. It sticks to my chest and

affixed itself to my skin to Hoover up all the data inside me.

According to their website my particular brand of heart monitor "enables a truly uninterrupted signal,

resulting in a median 99% analyzable time" while it captures diverse data points like "heart rate trends,

symptom/rhythm correlation, most relevant heart rhythm strips, and daily and total ectopy burden.""

So, only slightly terrifying.

When I feel my heart do [something] I click a button

on the monitor and then record what I'm doing at the time. Along with the monitor they gave me a little notebook to write things down in but GOOD NEWS: there's an app for that. Thank fucking god, do I look like someone who knows where a pen is, ever.

But: what am I ever doing at the time?

-Taking a shower (I've been experimenting in quar

-Walking the dog (We saw one of the Cambridge

-Working outside on the patio\* (I have spent so much

time out there this summer that woodland creatures

(squirrels, rats, mice) are no longer afraid of me.)

-Laundry; Cooking; Dishes; (So sick of cooking. I am

now militant about one pot meals. You get a starch, a

protein, and a vegetable, served in a bowl with a one

Occasionally now I have moments, sometimes hours even, when I don't feel my heart doing anything weird. When I don't feel my heart doing anything at all. Which is normal.

When my heart started freaking out I was scared by it. Now I like it: a reminder that my heart exists, is doing something. I'm more worried now in those moments when I don't feel anything, weird or otherwise.

What I'm always thinking about is: your hearts beats a certain number of times during your life, and then it doesn't beat anymore. You don't get to know what that number is, but it exists, and every moment your heart gets one beat closer to it.

The irregular beats, the missed beats, mean more to me than the regular beats. As for what's causing them? There's a reason, or there isn't. There's something I can do to alleviate it, or it's just how things are now. It's something to do with my heart, or it's something to do with my brain, or it's something to do with [gestures wildly].

Your heart beats until it doesn't. Some of those beats are memorable, many of them aren't. The end.

**A heart that hurts is a heart that works**

-Juliana Hatfield

I wear this monitor for 2 weeks. As of this writing I still have another week. I'm not supposed to get it wet so I do this whole plastic wrap and medical tape routine every morning before I shower. After the 2 weeks I peel it off and put it in a box and mail it to them, and then they download\*\*\* and analyze the data and create some report that tells me something about my heart. (And then presumably sell my heart data to Facebook or whoever.)

I don't know how long it'll take after I send the monitor back to learn something from it. Do they email me a report? Will I hear nothing back ever, and leave more messages at my doctor's office that never get returned?

It doesn't really matter. Maybe the data will tell us something interesting, but maybe it won't. Most people I've talked to who've had heart weirdness and heart monitors say: It's not a big deal, it turns out to be stress or anxiety, it goes away, or you learn to live with it.

I was never really worried about whether this would turn out to be a major problem. I do have family history of heart stuff\*\*\*\* but it's mostly likely stress. I mean [gestures wildly].

Standing in the kitchen eating something over the sink b/c I already have enough plates to wash (Say it

and that is fun to ride around in)

Occasionally going for a bike ride (Lately exploring

saying 54 was the highlight of the series.)