

How Eisenhower Urgent Care Saved John Brown's Body



John Brown

I hadn't seen a doctor in 45 years," says Andrew (John) Brown, 69, a retired automotive industry executive. "I'd never been sick, and the only surgery I'd had was having my tonsils out when I was a kid, back in the days when they used ether," he adds, laughing.

But his "physician-free" lifestyle changed in early December.

"On Sunday, December 5, around eight o'clock at night, I had tremendous stomach pain," John recalls, noting that he had made fettuccine alfredo for dinner that evening. "I was tempted to go to the emergency room at Eisenhower Medical Center, but decided I could get through it."

The next morning, the pain had subsided, but John still did not feel well. "I had no appetite," he says. "I also had a slight fever...so I stayed in bed."

On Tuesday, he still felt under the weather, and a friend recommended that John go to the Eisenhower Urgent Care in Rancho Mirage, just down the street from where he was living in Palm Desert. John acquiesced.

"They had me in the exam room in less than 30 minutes," he relates. "When Dr. Colombini came in, I told her how I'd been feeling. She did an exam, and ordered a blood test and X-rays. When she saw the results, she said she thought I might have gallstones and scheduled me to go to Eisenhower for an ultrasound."

"When a patient presents with abdominal pain, sometimes it's minor," Dr. Colombini says. "But if the patient is not eating, plus there's a fever, these are signs that something more serious is going on, so we did a bigger workup."

"We saw some abnormalities in Mr. Brown's blood work and X-rays, and ordered an abdominal ultrasound for the very next day," continues Dr. Colombini. "Because we are part of the Eisenhower system, it's a pretty seamless process to get more advanced imaging when we need it."

John also had revealed to Dr. Colombini that he had been experiencing heartburn for some time and had been treating himself with baking soda. "We started him on a prescription antacid and talked to him about diet and lifestyle," relates Dr. Colombini. "We explained about when to go to the emergency room, if his symptoms got worse."

John was scheduled for a follow-up visit at Eisenhower Urgent Care three days after his ultrasound, which confirmed Dr. Colombini's gallstone diagnosis. "Sometimes a patient will pass a gallstone, but sometimes it can get stuck and infected, which can affect liver function," explains Dr. Colombini. "Mr. Brown needed to see a surgeon for further evaluation."

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John scheduled an appointment with Eisenhower General Surgeon Karl A. Schulz, MD for the following week. Dr. Schulz ordered a CT (computed tomography) scan, and after seeing the results, told John that surgery was in his future.

"I had surgery on January 14, and Dr. Schulz removed a gallstone he said was the size of a golf ball," John says. "Because of the way Dr. Schulz performed the surgery, I was in and out of the hospital the same day," he adds, referring to the minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery.

"I feel great," John says. "Sure, I had a couple of uncomfortable days right after the surgery, but it all went by pretty quickly. I feel really well."

John is back to his regular routine, which includes caring for a friend who suffers from macular degeneration and diabetes. "I have a home in Indian Wells, but I rent it out and stay with my friend in Palm Desert," shares John. "We used to play golf together, but had to stop when he couldn't see the ball anymore. He has to take a lot of different medications and insulin shots, and his kids don't live around here, so I help out. We joke that it's payback for me introducing him to his ex-wife," laughs John.

John has three children and seven grandchildren of his own who live in Santa Barbara, Manhattan Beach and Irvine Ranch. He visits them regularly and enjoys boogie boarding with the grandchildren when he's at the coast.

"I'm getting my appetite back," John says. "I love to cook...but that fettuccine alfredo that I made that night was so rich, it may have set my gallbladder off. So, I am still cautious, and haven't done any gourmet cooking since then. But, I did have a craving for burritos and tacos today...so I went out and got some!"

Overall, Brown is extremely pleased with the care he received from everyone affiliated with Eisenhower Medical Center and its Urgent Care system. "I was so impressed with how fast Eisenhower Urgent Care evaluated my situation and took care of me," John says. "Dr. Colombini, the nurses who took my blood, the staff — they were all wonderful...and that's why I called them afterwards, just to say thank you. The service was just fabulous."