



February 16, 2011 – Grand Rapids, MI

## The Widowmaker

Monday I talked about the coronary arteries and what they do. It was Valentine's Day and I wanted to focus on the positive and upbeat. But, as always, there's more to the story and that's the focus of today's message.

The blood vessels that supply the heart are called the coronary arteries. The right coronary artery supplies the blood to the right side of the heart, both the atrium and ventricle. This is the low-pressure part of the heart; it receives blood from the rest of the body and pumps it a short distance to the lungs.

The left side is the high-pressure part of the system, and thus has a more extensive blood supply. The primary vessel is the left main coronary artery. It divides into the circumflex artery, which supplies blood to the left atrium and back and side of the left ventricle, and the left anterior descending artery, which supplies blood to the front and bottom of the left ventricle. With a more extensive supply, the left ventricle is probably the most important of the four chambers of the heart.

But the left main coronary artery also has a nickname, and not a cute, friendly one; it's called the widowmaker. If you get a blockage in this artery, the lack of blood flow to the left ventricle is so severe that it usually causes a fatal arrhythmia. For those of you who remember him, that's probably what killed the journalist Tim Russert. The lack of blood flow is too extensive to overcome, even with immediate help.

I hope that I have your attention. If you haven't signed up for the *Heart Attack Prevention Webinar*, today would be a good time to do so. I'm going to focus on one heart issue: how to reduce your risk of a heart attack and sudden death. Important goals, right? You don't want to miss this one.

What are you prepared to do today?

*Dr. Chet*

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