

Tim Schmeeckle is adamant about one thing these days.

"If you feel weird, go get it checked out," he said.

Schmeeckle, who's recovering from triple bypass surgery, should know.

And the 50-year-old farmer shudders to think what might have happened if he hadn't heeded several warning signs.

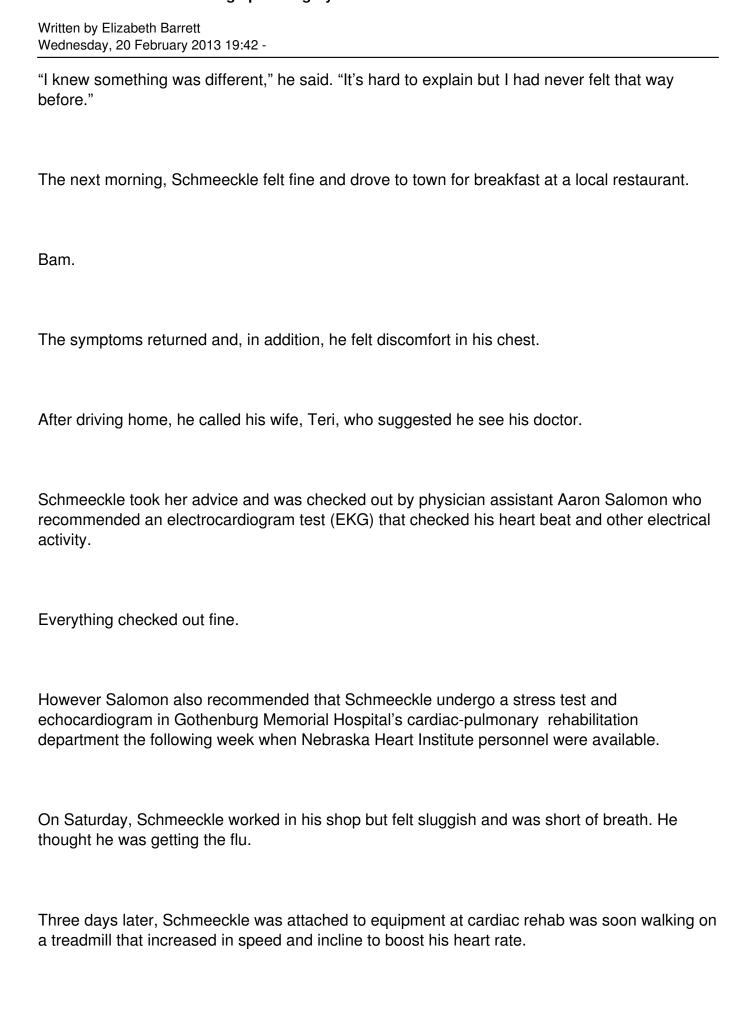
Schmeeckle's story begins on a Thursday night at his farm home north of Gothenburg, near the end of January.

After eating supper, he decided to treat himself to a frozen caramel fudge ice cream cone.

He then headed downstairs to his office.

"I was sitting and looking at the computer when all of a sudden I felt my throat swelling," Schmeeckle said. "And both my arms, in the elbow areas, were tingly."

Schmeeckle didn't feel pain but was uncomfortable.



Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Wednesday, 20 February 2013 19:42 -"I was so bad out of shape," he said with a laugh. The last thing Schmeeckle remembers is hearing cardiac rehab director Myra Gronewold asking that the treadmill be stopped. He then laid on a bed next to the equipment while the staff took an echocardiogram which was an ultrasound image of his heart. Gronewold said images of the heart in motion helps cardiac specialists assess function of heart valves, changes in the contraction of the heart wall and other things. "I was shot after the test," Schmeeckle said. "And I had no inclination that anything was wrong." Thinking he still had the flu and typical aches and pains of being half a century old, Schmeeckle, was shocked to hear that he had flunked the stress test. "How bad?" he asked. "Bad," he was told. Two days later, Schmeeckle and wife were in Lincoln. Schmeeckle was scheduled for a heart catheterization in which doctors can diagnose and and treat some heart conditions. During the procedure, if needed, the surgeon planned to implant stents to open any blocked arteries.

