

# Wally takes advice to heart before op on TV

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In the past week, Wally Katzke has received many phone calls from South Africans just like him - all potential candidates for this country's second-biggest killer: cardiovascular disease.

"I've received plenty of calls from people who say they're exactly like me," says the 52-year-old Katzke, who runs a Gauteng panel heating business. "I tell them that they must change their lives now."

That's advice the heavy smoker, who until now subsisted on red meat, mash and curries, wishes he had heeded almost nine years ago when his doctors first picked up signs of heart disease.

Tonight the father-of-two and grandfather, will go under the knife at Joburg's Netcare Milpark Hospital in SA's first live broadcast of open-heart surgery. Doctors will attempt to rectify narrowed arteries that raise Katzke's risk of having a "massive heart attack at any moment".

This is part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of SA's heart health TV education campaign, *Meet Wally's Heart*, which hopes to serve as a "chilling" wake-up call to South Africans to prevent cardiovascular disease, the most common cause of death in the country after HIV/Aids.

The disease claims the lives of almost 200 people every day in the



□ Wally Katzke

country and stems from poor lifestyle choices, like an unhealthy diet, lack of exercise and smoking.

Katzke will be admitted to Milpark this morning for the three-hour single bypass surgery. "All things considered, I'm well. Ag, I've been speaking to a lot of guys who've undergone the op and I've got a lot of feedback and counselling. They say it's nothing to worry about. But this week has been very tough. When you know you must go for a

heart operation, you're very anxious."

In 2000, doctors placed Katzke on medication to control his elevated cholesterol and blood pressure and he had a stent inserted into a blocked artery to improve his quality of life.

He continued to smoke heavily, eat poorly and avoid exercise.

Just over a month ago, his strained heart issued another warning when Katze felt a stab of sharp pain in his lower neck, shoulder and arm. A cardiologist told him he would have to undergo open heart surgery.

"You know this thing started out with a request to have my operation televised and I agreed," he said.

In the next eight to 10 days, Katzke will be discharged from hospital and he pledges to begin a new life. "Hopefully by this time next week, I'll be feeling a lot better. I'm going to do all the necessary things like eat a healthy diet. I'll eat more vegetables, but not necessarily all of them."