



Brigitte's story

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

Sydney resident Brigitte “almost fell out of the bed with shock” when in April 2021 she was told she would require a lung transplant in the next two years.

Diagnosed with rare lung disease Histiocytosis X in her 30s, Brigitte, now 55, lived with very few symptoms for more than two decades. She initially dismissed the warning signs when her lung condition deteriorated last year.

“I was walking around Centennial Park with my friend and I had to stop every few hundred metres because I couldn't breathe,” Brigitte, explains.

“But I just put it down to the fact that I was unfit.”

Results from a lung test six months later showed a drastic deterioration in Brigitte's lung capacity and she was told by her doctor to prepare for a lung transplant in the next two years.

“I was in shock, absolute shock,” Brigitte says.

“But I went straight into ‘fix it’ mode and decided I was going to do the best I could to get a good outcome,” she says.

Brigitte enrolled in the Prince of Wales Hospital's pulmonary rehabilitation program, a program recommended for patients requiring a transplant to increase their fitness and boost their chances of a good recovery after surgery.

The program run by a clinical specialist physiotherapist, involves twice weekly exercise sessions with cardio and weight exercises.

After initially attending the exercise sessions at the hospital's gym, Brigitte was pleased when sessions could continue online despite COVID-19 restrictions.

The level of care was not compromised, and the online sessions are tailored for individuals, Brigitte explains.

“The online classes are fun, we have a chat at the end, share a joke, it makes you smile.”



“Doing the classes online is a different approach but it's as successful as being in the gym.”

“I've improved my fitness significantly.”

Brigitte

“I’ve never missed a session.”

Since she began the program, Brigitte, who has also consulted with a dietician and made changes to her diet, has lost 12 kilos and significantly increased her fitness level.

With around five other participants in each class, ranging from young to old, Brigitte says connecting from home is easy for all ages.

Brigitte’s care involves a combination of face-to-face care and virtual care.

Brigitte says she prefers the “social aspect” of face-to-face classes and plans to return to classes at the hospital, she is glad virtual care was available during COVID-19 restrictions.

“It (virtual care) was fantastic for the duration of COVID-19,” she says.



NSW Health would like to thank Brigitte and the team at South Eastern Sydney Local Health District for sharing their insights.