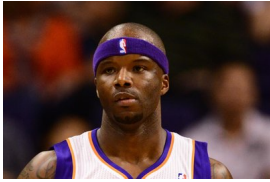


## Phoenix Suns' Jermaine O'Neal has irregular heartbeat, out indefinitely

Written by

Friday, 25 January 2013 07:23 -

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The [Suns](#) training staff works wonders to keep players healthy and playing at peak condition, but no amount of therapy can prevent or fix a heart issue.

[Channing Frye](#) has an enlarged heart whose healing process includes a year without putting undue stress on the body and allowing the heart to heal itself.

By comparison, Jermaine O'Neal's irregular heartbeat may appear innocuous but its worst-case scenario is just as fatal.

"I didn't know what was really happening," O'Neal said. "I thought I was having a heart attack."

O'Neal said he felt fine through early Monday afternoon, after practice and the alleged confrontation with the Suns' front office. He went home to eat and rest. Hours later, he felt his heart skipping around. He's had a murmur for a long time, like many folks, so at first he felt it was just that and would pass.

But the skipping heartbeat did not subside and after a mostly sleepless night he came to see the trainers on Tuesday and was immediately whisked to the hospital for tests while the rest of the team flew to Sacramento for a game.

The team only reported that O'Neal missed the plane due to what they termed an "unidentified medical issue".

"I didn't feel comfortable talking about it," he said of the report. "Because there wasn't anything to talk about it at the time till we figured out what was the problem. I didn't really know what was

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happening.

"I am 34 years old. Basketball isn't the #1 thing. I am the sole provider of my family. I'm a father, husband, son."

Per O'Neal, he was laying in the hospital bed after a battery of tests when he realized that fans and some media were accusing him of quitting on the team over the coaching change.

"I'm sitting at the hospital," he said. "And I'm like 'wait a minute, where'd they get that from?'"

He pled his case via twitter while on strong medication to calm his heart and has felt better each day since then as the meds do their work.

"They put me on some medication," O'Neal said. "It's a three-to-four day process to see if it helps. May need a lower dosage or a different type of medicine."

He said he felt better on Thursday than he had on any day since Monday night, though he was still dizzy if he jumped up too much during the game. Even Wednesday night was a tough one, he said, with breathing problems, after they had adjusted his medicine from Tuesday. But he trusts the process and was ready to take as long as he needed to recover.

"The main responsibility is to stay alive."

Sometimes, what you hear is all there is. There's no ulterior, clandestine motive of defiance. There's no tie-in to every other story in the news. It just what it is.

In this case, just hope (and pray, if that's what you do) that Jermaine O'Neal gets healthy again. And cheer him when he steps back out on that court.

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