

Former Cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken, 78, is brought back from the brink of death by a 'medical miracle' after induced coma

**When doctors failed to wake him, a priest was called to perform the last rites
But Aitken did come around the following day, much to the relief of his family
Ex-Tory MP began a new career as a prison chaplain after being jailed for perjury**

By [CHARLOTTE GRIFFITHS](#) DIARY EDITOR FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

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Former Cabinet Minister Jonathan Aitken was brought back from the brink of death by a 'medical miracle'.

The 78-year-old former Tory MP, who began a new career as a prison chaplain after he was jailed for perjury in the 1990s, survived two heart attacks during emergency surgery on his gut, which left him in an induced coma.

Friends told The Mail on Sunday that when doctors failed in their first attempt to wake him, a priest was called to perform the last rites.

A family source said: 'Doctors warned us he was slipping away and would likely have brain damage if he pulled through. After three days in a coma there was no change.'

'He didn't wake up from the coma the first time they tried. A day later, they tried again and we all said a big 'hooray' when he came round. We had our first conversation with him and he was foggy, but all right. It was a miracle, frankly.'

The source added: 'Now his brain is fine, he's up and the only issue is his throat. He's being fed through a tube. His gut is working. He's such a fighter, the prison experience has taught him how to survive.'



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Mr Aitken, who was Chief Secretary to the Treasury in John Major's government, was jailed for 18 months in 1999 after admitting perjury and perverting the course of justice during a failed attempt to sue a newspaper for libel.

He had been an MP for Thanet in Kent for 23 years before losing his seat at the 1997 General Election.

His medical problems began a year ago when he began suffering from a mild internal bleeding condition which were exacerbated when he contracted Covid in March last year.

Then two weeks ago he attended hospital for a routine gut procedure to treat the problem. When he returned home, he became unwell and was taken to the Lister Hospital in Central London two days later.

'His gut basically died,' said the family source. 'During emergency surgery he had two heart attacks. Doctors put him in an induced coma when his organs began failing.'

Mr Aitken's son William, 37, a Dubai-based businessman, flew back to the UK as his father lay in intensive care, but had to go into quarantine at a Gatwick hotel.

Meanwhile, Mr Aitken was receiving support from a collection of religious friends who formed a WhatsApp group to pray for his survival.

The family was also contacted by high-profile wellwishers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Tory Party co-chairman Ben Elliot, Prince Michael of Kent, Tory MP David Davis; the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev; various Arab royals and Diane Abbott, whose son is Mr Aitken's godson.

Novelist and friend Lady Antonia Fraser held a candlelit vigil for him.

Mr Aitken's four children have since been making arrangements to fly into the UK from their homes around the world to see him once lockdown restrictions allow.