

Advanced Techniques in Wound Care

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If you have a wound that won't heal, innovative techniques can help heal your chronic wounds and get you back to living your life. Catastrophic wounds can occur as a result of poor circulation, known as Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD), and loss of sensation in the legs and feet. Doctors work diligently to prevent loss of limbs and wound care centers have many new modalities to salvage wounded limbs.

Wound care centers use a multidisciplinary approach consisting of Vascular specialists, Infectious Disease, Endocrinology, General, Podiatric, and Plastic Surgeons, dieticians, Physical Therapists and many other medical professionals to bring the pinnacle of care to patients.

One of the new modalities used by wound care specialists is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, or HBO. With this technique, patients are placed in a chamber to breathe high concentrations of oxygen. This increases the oxygen in the tissues needed to heal wounds. Patients can enjoy watching TV or even sleep while this revolutionary treatment helps heal their wounds. This technique is useful for patients with deep infected ulcers who have PAD and infection in the bone under and around the ulceration. HBO allows us to heal wounds that in the past would have resulted in a loss of limb.

Wound care specialists also have remarkable new products that are used to heal wounds without having to do invasive procedures. These products are biologically developed skin replacements and allow for coverage of the wound, cell replacement and provide a scaffold for new tissue to grow. The benefit of this technique is that the surgeon does not have to create a wound (donor site) in an effort to heal another wound (recipient site) and allows for less pain and reduced infection and failure of the donor site graft.

Wound care specialists also use special molded shoe inserts, casts, braces and many other types of medical equipment to prevent the development of wounds by protecting the feet of vulnerable patients. Many diabetics develop ulcers on their feet and legs and Medicare provides coverage for most diabetics for special shoes designed to prevent irritation and the subsequent development of wounds caused by poor fitting shoes or orthopedic deformities. These shoes have the same appearance as conventional shoes, but have special molded insoles obtained from impressions of the patients feet and are properly sized to provide ultimate comfort and protection.

Wound care physicians also treat a multitude of other wound types. This includes post-surgical wounds that are difficult to heal, such as sternal or chest wounds following cardiac bypass surgery. Many older patients have bed sores which can be managed by many of the techniques discussed. Nursing homes can have access to wound specialists for these types of wounds, either by in-house nurses or by consulting wound care physician groups who see patients.

With these advances in wound care, please take advantage of the capable physicians and nurses who can help you heal. These professionals have wonderful techniques at their disposal to help you.

To contact the Center for Wound Healing at Brandywine Hospital, call 610-383-8431. Dr. Pongia is a member of the medical staff at Brandywine Hospital. He was named as Main Line Today's Top Doc in podiatry for 2010 and 2011. Dr. Pongia specializes in foot and ankle reconstructive surgery as well as wound care of the lower extremities. He practices with Dr. Kevin DeAngelis and Dr. Stephen Soondar at Brandywine Foot and Ankle Associates.

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