

# HBOT Saves Amputation from Shark Attack

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## Hyperbaric chamber saves shark attack victim's hand

JUPITER, FL — He had done it hundreds of times: surfed the swell just off the south florida coast, but one day, last year, a shark set its sights on Daryl Zbar, biting and gnarling his right hand. After reconstructive surgery, his wounds weren't healing and Daryl was facing the real possibility doctors would amputate part of his hand. Doctors put him back together thanks to a program that was almost cut from hospitals. Early one Monday morning last September surf was up and so was Jupiter resident Daryl Zbar. "I had surfed all day Saturday and Sunday with friends and then Monday, everybody is working and I had a free day," Said Zbar. His day at the beach started—no different from the others he had spent on the waves. "I've done it thousands of times—been doing it since I was 5," said Zbar. Daryl bobbed in the water off Hutchinson Island on the back of his surfboard sorting out the waves, waiting for just the right one."I got to the outside and as soon as I plopped down on my stomach and dug my right hand in to paddle, it hit me," said Zbar. "The thing I remember most is this like [vibrating noise] and I think that was his tail flipping back and forth as he was shaking his head. It grabbed me right here [on the hand] and shredded it. I knew right away it was shark on my hand and when I pulled my hand up, I saw him he was only about that big and he let go and swam away." Daryl survived the encounter, but when he lifted his hand from the water his thumb was dangling like a flap. He caught the next wave into the beach and a fisherman rushed him to the hospital. "It was pretty severe," said Dr. David Rankin, the surgeon on duty that day,"I looked at the thumb under a live X-ray. It was actually almost completely amputated and detached at the joint." Rankin did everything he could to stitch Daryl up, but the tissue on his hand had been ripped to shreds by the shark's fierce tug and jagged teeth. ***Daryl would need intense therapy to avoid amputation. The healing really began for Daryl Zbar here in a hyperbaric chamber at St. Marys Medical Center.*** The folks who run the chamber say it simulates the pressure of a submarine. That pressure compresses Oxygen, infusing it into the blood stream in a way that helps heal wounds. "The increase oxygen levels in the blood act almost like an antibiotic. They allow white blood cells in a regular immune system to function better and more appropriately," said Rankin. *Doctors prescribe the chamber for patients suffering from botched plastic surgery or diabetics with wounds that just won't heal.* It's also used emergently for divers suffering from the bends. For Daryl Zbar, having hyperbarics in his backyard, meant his hand remained intact."I think if he hadn't had it, there was a strong possibility he would have lost his thumb," said Rankin. Today, Daryl is undaunted, Looking forward to a fully functioning hand and a chance to return to the place he loves. "The sooner I get back in the water the better. I'll dive, I'll surf, I'll fish. I may choose my days more carefully," said Zbar. Admittedly, Daryl says he remembers the water being a bit murky that morning he went surfing with lots of bait fish running and he believes the shark mistook his hand for a small fish. He said he doesn't need courage to return to the water—he made peace with creatures of the sea a long time ago—he said "when you go surfing you're in their world