

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Helps Heal a 13-year old Diabetic Wound Sufferer

Health Check: Wound center

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A woman reaps the benefits of a new wound care center at Charlton Memorial Hospital.

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Published: July 22, 2010

FALL RIVER, Mass. –

[Mary Coutinho](#) has been living with [diabetes](#) for 30 years.

It's what led her to the [Southcoast Wound Care Center](#) at [Charlton Memorial Hospital](#).

But not before suffering for years.

[Coutinho](#) had open wounds on her feet that wouldn't heal, a result of her [diabetes](#). It led to the [amputation](#) of two of her toes on her right foot. She was facing the same fate with a recurring wound on her other foot.

"It was beginning to be crucial because in January I was hospitalized for about eight days because it had festered," [Coutinho](#) said. "And at that point I knew that if I didn't have another alternative, they were going to have to cut it off."

For [Coutinho, a wedding photographer](#), it would have ended her career.

"There were a lot of things in jeopardy. I was even thinking of selling my home for a single-level home because the stairs were quite an issue," she said.

"(Coutinho) happened to be here just when we were having our hyperbaric oxygen unit open. [So](#) for her, this was the missing link," said [Dr. Gerald Monchik, director](#) of the [Southcoast Wound Center](#).

A hyperbaric unit is part of the [hospital's new wound care center](#). [Coutinho](#) was one of the first patients in the [center](#).

"What the hyperbaric oxygen chamber does is when you're inside of the chamber, you're breathing 100 percent oxygen under two atmospheres of pressure. That oxygen in the blood then can get places where the red blood cells can't get," [Monchik](#) said.

And, in [Coutinho's](#) case, help heal a wound that hadn't healed in 13 years.

However, it took time — 40 treatments at two hours a treatment.

"It was long sometimes, but the movies helped. It wasn't uncomfortable at all," [Coutinho](#) said.

[Coutinho's](#) wound, which she said was the size of a quarter and as deep as four quarters, is now completely healed.

The [hospital's new center](#) is not just about hyperbaric medicine.

“We have a team approach that’s not possible in a single office. So we have [general surgery](#). We have [vascular surgery](#), we have [plastic surgery](#) here and available. And also when we need testing and we need [a consultant, a consultant](#) can come to the [wound care center](#),” [Monchik](#) said.