

Coollest Solution For Severe Foot Pain



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If anyone knows how to put the freeze on chronic foot pain, it's podiatrist Marc Katz.

Just ask Willie Lucas. He's been suffering for the past 17 years.

"On the outside of my foot, it felt like I was stepping on nails," says Lucas, 55. "Just having a shoe on bothers me."

He had surgery on his left foot in 1999 for Morton's neuroma and pain in his heel and ankle. The pain lingered, and today he limps. He often has to rest at work.

Lucas found Katz online and decided to try cryosurgery. Driving 13 hours from Huntsville, Ala., to Tampa was nothing — especially if it meant he would be pain free.

and was walking out the door in 35 minutes.

"I can get around fairly well, and I don't feel any pain," Lucas said 24 hours later.

For people with painful foot conditions, cryosurgery is a virtually painless, minimally invasive procedure for relief. A typical session lasts 30 minutes.

Receiving local anesthesia is usually the most "painful" part of the process. A tiny incision is made, and a probe is used to freeze the problem nerves to about minus 90 degrees Fahrenheit. It happens in two three-minute cycles with 30 seconds of thawing in between. The inside of the nerve is destroyed while the outside "insulation" remains intact.

Antibiotic ointment is placed on the incision, which is wrapped in gauze and a pressure bandage. The nerve is not cut, and no stitches are needed. Some initially experience numbness and increased pain. Swelling and bruising may occur, and infection is rare but possible.

Patients should take it easy for the first 48 hours, but they can walk and return to work. "The nice thing about this procedure is that it accommodates people who can't take time off

FREEZE IT

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practicing for 18 years.

Since August, he has performed about 150 cryosurgeries with a success rate hovering at 80 percent. Patients include athletes, stay-at-home moms, the elderly and diabetics. Cryosurgery typically runs \$500 to \$1,000, and insurance covers most cases, Katz says.

Podiatrist James Christina, director of scientific affairs for the American Podiatric Medical Association, says cryosurgery isn't new, but its use in treating foot pain is. Clinical data and peer-reviewed papers are scarce, but Christina points to a couple of studies that show cryosurgery is as effective as other options in treating foot pain.

"It potentially is an effective treatment for chronic foot pain," Christi-

example, you may get to the point when other things have failed, and I think cryosurgery becomes another one of those options in addition to traditional heel pain surgery."

Eight years ago, Susan Crawford had ingrown toenails removed on both big toes. "From the minute I walked out of that doctor's office, I was in severe pain," she says.

It would shoot and throb along the inside of her feet. All she could do was go to work and go home. "My life totally changed," says Crawford, 57, of Town 'N Country.

Doctors told her she had neuropathy, but nothing worked. Then she visited Katz and had cryosurgery in March.

"I had the surgery done, and bingo!" she says. "My feet were a little tender, but after that went away, that was it. I already have recommended him to other people."

Crawford says she's pain free and wearing heels.

Starting kidney dialysis eight years ago led to foot pain for Mark Eden, 58, of Port Richey.

"The nerve endings didn't get lubricated well enough, and they literally dried out and rotted off. I had hundreds of open-ended nerves in

excruciating, and I couldn't walk."

The neuropathy had Eden using a cane and an electric scooter for longer distances. In May 2003, Eden had a kidney transplant, and the pain raged. He tried shock therapy, light therapy, spinal injections and more, to no avail.

"I had no quality of life. I couldn't go anywhere or do anything. I had been going to pain-management doctors, and all they do is give me medication, up to 600 milligrams of morphine a day. That didn't even take the pain away. We tried everything."

Katz performed cryosurgery on Eden in February, first on one foot. Within three days, his electric shocks disappeared. The pain lingers, but he's able to manage it with minimal medication.

"As it stands now, I can walk, I can run, I can ride a bike. I can pretty much do whatever I want, I just can't do it for any length of time. But I did get part of my quality of life back," Eden says. "As far as I'm concerned, the procedure is a miracle."



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