

This surgery's less painful way to get back on your feet

Dr. Sheldon Nadal is using ambulatory foot surgery instead of traditional foot surgery on his senior patients because it's very practical and less painful.

"This form of foot surgery, sometimes referred to as minimal incision, utilizes small incisions and reduces soft tissue work," explains Nadal, who is affiliated with several senior citizens' residences.

This concept is emerging as the foot surgery of the future. More and more doctors are using this type of foot surgery, which was introduced more than 20 years ago and is now being utilized by the members of the Academy of Ambulatory Foot Surgeons — an international organization based in Washington.

In the fall of 1981, Nadal opened an office at 586 Eglinton Ave. E. and started performing this technique on three problem areas: Corns, which can occur on the outer portions of the digits or between two toes, callouses beneath the ball of the foot, bunions in which the great toe joint is enlarged and painful and hammertoes.

He explains why ambulatory surgery is advantageous:

"First, there is very little post-operative pain and disability. In the majority of cases, Aspirin is all that is needed for post-operative discomfort. In almost all cases, casts and crutches and pins are not used.

"Local anesthesia, considered by most doctors to be the safest form of anesthesesia, is utilized in these procedures.

"Cosmetic value is another factor that patients find important. This type of surgery leaves a very small scar, usually from 1/8 inch to 1/4 inch long."

These procedures can almost always be performed painlessly in the office, Nadal points out. Immediately after ambulatory foot surgery, as the name implies, the patient is able to walk out of the office and usually returns to normal activity very quickly.

This results in impressive reduction in costs to the government since expensive hospital beds and surgery rooms aren't necessary. That means savings for patients since they can usually go back to work quite quickly. This is especially important to those whose time is money.

Ambulatory foot surgery is not covered by OHIP. The price for corns ranges from \$185 to \$250, depending on complexity. Bunions cost \$445 each. Callouses, not considered surgery, cost \$25 with a \$2 discount for seniors and OHIP paying \$9 of that amount.

"Minimal incision surgery is a concept and technique which, when utilized by an experienced podiatric surgeon, can produce very satisfying results," Nadal says.

Nadal graduated from the University of Toronto with an honors Bachelor of Science degree in 1975. His interest in podiatry (diagnosis and treatment of foot disorders) took him to the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine in Cleveland, where he completed the



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four-year course in 1979 and earned the degree Doctor of Podiatric Medicine.

He followed this with a residency in foot surgery at the Broadstreet Hospital and Medical Centre in Philadelphia.

Following his residency, he remained in Philadelphia to learn ambulatory foot surgery. He studied the technique of one of the pioneers in the field, Dr. Abram Plon, a former president of the Academy of Ambulatory Foot Surgeons.

"I was trained in traditional foot surgery," Nadal says, "and I watched him perform surgery and saw some of his post-operative results. I was very impressed with what I saw. I knew I had to learn to do this type of surgery because the patients were able to walk right away. They were having very little pain afterwards."

Nadal can be reached at 486-9917.



KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR

Best foot forward: Dr. Sheldon Nadal, ambulatory foot surgeon, discusses his less painful surgical techniques with senior patient Mary Carter in his Eglinton Ave. E. office. In most cases just Aspirin is needed for discomfort and casts, crutches and pins are not used.