

Foot doctor operates using lasers



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Minor foot surgery can now be performed in a doctor's office through the use of laser beams.

Soft tissue ailments — ingrown nails, warts, calluses caused by plugged glands, fungal nails, nerve tumors and enlarged scars — can all be treated by lasers, says Dr. Sheldon Nadal, a Toronto podiatrist.

"The laser is very precise," Nadal says. "It effectively removes diseased tissues while leaving the surrounding healthy tissues unaffected. The result is very little post-operative pain and swelling."

Also, by sealing blood vessels as it cuts, the laser reduces bleeding, allowing a surgeon to see more clearly what he is doing.

Nadal, a member of the International College of Podiatric Laser Surgery, points out that the laser reduces the chance of post-operative infection because the beam de-

stroys all bacteria, viruses and spores upon contact.

Conditions treated with a laser tend not to recur as often and scars tend to be smaller.

Although the laser is a significant medical advancement, Nadal cautions that it is not effective for all foot problems.

"For bunions, hammered toes and most corns and calluses, I prefer a technique called minimal incision surgery," he says.

The procedure is performed in the office through quarter-inch openings in the skin and patients experience minimal post-operative discomfort.

"Usually, only Aspirin is needed after surgery," he says. "In almost all cases, casts, pins and crutches are not necessary."

Both methods enable patients to walk immediately and return to normal activities quickly.

Nadal regrets that OHIP does not cover laser or minimal incision surgery performed by podiatrists.

"The new (Ontario) government is being made aware of this. Perhaps one day it will change the existing policies and make the benefits of these techniques accessible to everyone."