

Back on His Feet

Tarsal tunnel release eliminated Harley Edson's diabetes-related foot pain

For many people with diabetes, foot problems are almost inevitable.

"Often, people with diabetes don't realize they have a serious problem with their feet, as many lose the preventive mechanisms that alert them something is wrong," says Tom Huntsman, MD, Bassett plastic and reconstructive surgeon. "But for people with diabetes who have a change in sensation or debilitating pain, or neuropathy, tarsal tunnel release may provide an option for pain relief."

Tarsal tunnel release involves making a small incision on the side of the foot, releasing or decompressing the nerve that goes to the bottom of the foot. The procedure opens the tunnel in which the nerve travels, releasing the pressure.

Harley Edson, of Milford, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes more than 30 years ago. He still had sensation in his feet and suffered with diabetic foot pain in both feet for the past five years. "My feet felt like they were on fire, a bee-stinging feeling, yet felt like they were in a bucket of ice," he says. "I limped all the time."

Edson was prescribed medication for the pain, but it didn't provide much relief and was expensive. "When I heard

about tarsal tunnel release and found I was a good candidate for it, I went for

it," he says. "I was looking for relief of the pain. Plus, I had seen some friends lose their legs; I didn't want to go down that road."

After the procedure, Edson walked out of the operating room on his own and returned to his job as an environmental services technician two weeks later.

"I can't explain how good it feels," says Edson, who also paints houses outside of work. "Now I can get up and go without pain."

"Not every patient is a candidate for the procedure, but if we can catch people before it is too late, the release can greatly improve quality of life by eliminating pain and discomfort," says Dr. Huntsman. "It's also good to keep in mind that many diabetes-related problems can be prevented with regular medical care." •



Foot Care Tips



To prevent injury and infection, pay close attention to your feet if you have diabetes.

Remember these tips:

- Get regular checkups and examine feet often. No pain doesn't mean there is not a problem.
- Don't ignore areas of redness or lesions. If there is pain, let your doctor know.
- Keep blood sugars controlled and take your medications.

FIND FOOT RELIEF

Tarsal tunnel release can relieve foot pain for people with diabetes. For more information, please call **800-BASSETT (227-7388)** and mention the article "Back on His Feet."

