

In the United States, chronic wounds affect 6.7 million people, and that number is expected to rise 2 percent every year over the next decade.

An aging population and increasing rates of diseases and conditions like diabetes, obesity and the effects of radiation therapy contribute to the chronic wound epidemic. Now, however, there is a breath of fresh air when it comes to treating these wounds: hyperbaric oxygen therapy, or HBOT.

HBOT is an innovative way to help patients heal. During a hyperbaric oxygen therapy session, a patient enters a special chamber to breathe in pure oxygen in air pressure levels higher than average. The goal is to fill the blood with enough oxygen to repair tissues and restore normal body function.

SOT

Heather Hawkins, Program Director, OSF HealthCare Wound Care Clinic

2:11 "It's actually pushing that 100% oxygen into their plasma, rather than their red blood cells, which then floods the body with that oxygen, and it goes directly to that site, and it helps reduce swelling, reduces infection, and it helps build healthy tissue in order to help that patient heal in a way that they weren't able to heal before."

The OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center Wound Care Clinic just installed two hyperbaric oxygen chambers from Healogics Inc., and Streator resident Ray Talbott is one of the first patients to participate in the HBOT program.

Talbott had a toe amputated, and has been unable to work the last couple months. Now, after a week of therapy, he says he feels like he is on the path to healing.

SOT

Ray Talbott, Wound Care Clinic Patient

2:05 "Certainly as the results get better and better – I think that's the hope – the wound and everything is starting to heal.

(BUMP TO)

4:59 "I still got a ways to go, but we are talking about possible starting work not this coming week, but perhaps the following week, at least on a part time."

Wound injuries damage the body's blood vessels, which release fluid that leaks into the tissues and causes swelling. This swelling deprives the damaged cells of oxygen, and tissue starts to die. HBOT reduces swelling while flooding the tissues with oxygen. HBOT aims to break the cycle of swelling, oxygen starvation and tissue death.

It is a technology Hawkins says her team at the Wound Care Clinic is grateful for.

SOT

Heather Hawkins, Program Director, OSF HealthCare Wound Care Clinic

3:50 "I just think it shows innovation. That they are really bringing the most advanced treatment options to their patients, and so we're not having to refer out to outside entities in town or out of our city limits. It's having that treatment option right here at home for these patients who love to come to OSF and believe in our mission."

The HBOT chambers at the Wound Care Clinic are also the largest in the state of Illinois, and can hold up to 750 pounds, to keep larger patients and patients suffering from claustrophobia comfortable.

Wound care treatment options at the OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center Wound Care Clinic include negative pressure wound therapy, bio-engineered tissues, biosynthetic dressings, growth factor therapies and the recent addition of hyperbaric oxygen therapy.