

June is Wound Healing Awareness Month.

Welcome to SBH Bronx Health Talk, produced by SBH Health System, and broadcast from St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx. I'm Steven Clark. An estimated seven million people in the United States have non-healing wounds. This includes one in six people over the age of sixty-five. Untreated wounds could lead to amputation and even death, with us today to discuss chronic wounds in Dr. Ronald McLean, Medical Director for the Center of Wound Healing and hyperbaric medicine at SBH Health System. Welcome Dr. McLean.

Dr. McLean

Thank you.

Steve

So Dr., even small wound if left untreated could have major consequences.

Dr. McLean

Yes. This could lead depending on the medical condition of the patient or illnesses the patient may have like diabetes.

Steve

Right. I heard the other day that a patient came to the emergency room at St. Barnabas hospital, had a small wound that concerned one of the nurses there, and she had it checked out. It turned out that the patient needed immediate surgery, for what could have been a life threatening condition. So obviously, it seems that even an occupier wound could be an issue.

Dr. McLean

Yes. That could be a problem, depending, once again depending on the comorbidity of the patient and other things that cause it.

Steve

So if you have a small wound, and you're diabetic, is there something you should look for in the wound to tell your doctor?

Dr. McLean

Sure, any changes in the appearance of the wound like redness or drainage or even tenderness

Steve

If you're not diabetic, and you have a wound that doesn't heal, is there a certain period of time you should watch it until you get medical attention?

Dr. McLean

It varies, it depends on other things happening with the patient. For certainly if you have a wound that's not healing for maybe a couple of weeks or getting worse, you should seek medical attention.

Steve

Are people with other conditions particularly susceptible to chronic wounds?

Dr. McLean

Yes. People with primarily diabetes, the injuries to the nerves. People also with vascular disease are not getting enough blood supply to the area of the wound.

Steve

Why is that older people seem to be the one

Dr. McLean

Certain diseases progress with age. The disease progresses with age based on where the disease itself progresses. Vascular diseases are not getting enough blood to the area. The vessels over time get narrow, and this occurs with age.

Steve

So a person comes to the Center for Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Medicine. What's the protocol? What happens to them?

Dr. McLean

Once a patient comes in, the wound is assessed after getting a complete history and physical. This includes determining the blood supply to the particular area. We send them for specialized tests. If the patient has diabetes certain other tests are done to determine if the blood sugar is controlled.

Steve

So that means you look at that diet, you talk about their diet?

Dr. McLean

It's discussed along with their habits. So if you have a patient who is a smoker or an ex-smoker, then this is the elevated cause.

Steve

Ok. What are the likely treatment options?

Dr. McLean

Once it's determined that the patient has adequate blood supply after all these vascular tests, the blood sugar is controlled and the patient is diabetic, then we get into this phase we call local wound care, where the wound itself is managed. If there is any sign of infection, then the patient is treated with antibiotics. So that along with them controlling the blood sugar, watching their nutritional status and their habits. All of this will help their wound care. We go into the local wound care phase after that, it involves stress and changes

Steve

So this is an ongoing, it's not a one shot deal?

Dr. McLean

It's an ongoing process, and this is the portion that is most involved in managing wound care. The local wound care addresses the changes each week or each day depending on the kind of wound the patient has. This is long term.

Steve

When does hyperbaric oxygen therapy come into play?

Dr. McLean

It depends on the kind of wound the patient has. If the patient has a wound that involves the bone. This is one of the things that prompts the usage of hyperbaric therapy. If the patient is a diabetic and local wound care is still not healing, this will prompt the usage of hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Steve

Tell us a little more about the hyperbaric oxygen therapy. These are large chambers that the patient lays in for a certain amount of time or a certain period of time.

Dr. McLean

Yes. That have what we call multi chambers. Multi patient chambers where a number of patients could be placed and managed. A lot of places have single patient chambers. One patient is placed and in there for about ninety minutes with oxygen being administered under a hundred percent pressure. This goes on for ninety minutes, and might last anywhere from thirty to sixty sessions of treatment.

Steve

You've had good results?

Dr. McLean

Yes, with helium on the legs, the diabetic foot muscles, I also have treated patients with radiation burns, radiation injuries with hyperbaric therapy.

Steve

I guess with a lot of other health conditions, early intervention makes a huge difference?

Dr. McLean

Sure.

Steve

I heard a story. I was speaking to one of your patients who's a diabetic, and he said he wasn't even sure where he got it from. He was walking bare foot in his house, and the next thing he knew he had a small wound, and he didn't think much of it. He spoke to the chiropractor, and the chiropractor said don't wait any longer come in, or go to the emergency room.

Dr. McLean

Part of the problem has to do with the disease process itself. Patients who are diabetic also have sensation in their legs. They could injure them and not know it, especially on the bottom of the foot, they don't feel any pain.

Steve

I guess in our community where there are a lot of incidents of diabetes, that primarily what you see here.

Dr. McLean

Yes. It's progressing quite a bit.

Steve

Is it very common for a patient who has diabetes, it's not infrequent that they come in to need medical treatment because things look good and they come back.

Dr. McLean

Yes

Steve

So, if someone is concerned, who wants to make a call for themselves or a loved one? Is there a phone number they could call for you?

Dr. McLean

Yes. I could be reached at 718-960-5064.

Steve

Ok, let me repeat that number again 7178-960-5064. Dr. McLean, thank you for a few minutes today.