



- Trevor Weeks, 24 hours Photos

Toronto podiatrist Dr. Hartley Miltchin. Inset: Illustration of Morton's Neuroma (indicated by circled area).

It's a feet first for Canada

Toronto Podiatrist Dr. Hartley Miltchin's got both feet in the door when it comes to innovation.

He is the only podiatrist in Canada performing a brand-new revolutionary procedure for the common, painful foot condition Morton's Neuroma, an enlarged nerve that usually occurs between the third and fourth toes, resulting in nerves that become irritated or pinched.

Miltchin boasts a 100 per cent success rate since last summer among his patients, which are typically women over 30.

"Women wear narrower, tighter shoes than men," explains the Toronto-born Miltchin, who is also the executive director of the Canadian Podiatric Medical Association. "It's inevitable problems are going to occur."

Miltchin specializes in Minimally Invasive Neurological Decompression (MIND), which uses local anaesthesia precision instruments to slip in be-

tween the toes, or web space, and releasing the small intermetatarsal ligament so the two bones are allowed to move apart, alleviating the tension.

The patient is out of the office in under 10 minutes, the stitches are out in seven to 10 days, and patients are on their feet the entire time.

A simple, "ingenious method with a small failure rate and quick healing time," says the father of three, who encourages his patients post-surgery to wear shoes that fit loose, like running shoes.

The basic, traditional type of surgery for Morton's Neuroma has been around for many years, and consists of an incision made on the bottom of the foot to sever the ligament and remove part of the nerve causing the irritation. This typically renders patients off their feet for several weeks.

In general, Miltchin, 47, urges regular check-ups for feet — treating them the same as teeth and eyes.

"It's going to pose a problem for women who wear high heels on a daily basis," he says, adding if women were to wear the narrow shoes only on occasion, it would also cut down the risk of aggravating foot conditions.

"A lot of foot problems can be prevented — pain can be prevented," he says. "Most people think just because they constantly use their feet, it's normal to have pain. But it's not."

Miltchin says he sees a "fair amount" of neuroma patients, and is now training a colleague to perform the procedure he says is exclusive to his clinic.

"The problem with doctors in general, they don't accept change easily, they are set in their ways, they don't accept innovation readily.

"(The procedure's) just got to catch on."

To contact Miltchin, call his North York clinic Accent on Feet at 416-635-8637 or visit accentonfeet.com

- Jennifer Bill, 24 hours