

## Ankle replacement serves as life-changer for Grayslake man

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GRAYSLAKE – For more than 40 years, Grayslake resident Dan Chesman, 63, struggled with residual pain from a severe ankle injury he suffered in a toboggan accident as a young man.

Thanks to advancements in medical technology, he's now enjoying a greater quality of life after undergoing a total ankle replacement.

"To anybody who's considering it, I would say get it done yesterday, if not sooner," said Chesman, whose surgery was performed in Jan. 2014, by [Dr. Anand Vora](#), an orthopedic surgeon at the [Illinois Bone & Joint Institute](#), which has locations in Grayslake, Libertyville and Chicago.

Vora, who performed the first total ankle replacement in Lake County in the fall of 2008, said the technology built into today's ankle replacement systems creates a more precise fit for much greater motion. The surgery is also less invasive and lasts longer.

"We're starting to be at the place we are with hip or knee replacements where we can confidently tell people these are going to last, and they're not experimental anymore. They are the standard of care for the right patient because they're long lasting," Vora said.

Ankle replacement surgery was a life-changer for Chesman, as was the toboggan accident he had in 1972 at age 21.

### **Moment of impact**

"My cousin and I were tobogganing down this very steep hill. I was trying to slow down. I panicked and stuck my foot out, which was a definite no-no. My right foot hit the ground at a high rate of speed. I broke my leg and crushed my ankle," Chesman said.

At the time of Chesman's accident, there wasn't much doctors could do besides put his leg in traction and apply a cast while healing took place. He also had rods drilled through his ankle and leg bone.

For Chesman, who had a full scholarship to Miami University in Ohio through the Navy ROTC program, continuing school was challenging because his injury required him to walk with crutches or a cane.

Despite his pain and limited mobility, Chesman persevered. After college, he was stationed on a Navy ship for four years. He then became a junior high school teacher and also taught Great Lakes recruits at the College of Lake County. Chesman later worked as a locomotive engineer for Amtrak, then Metra, his current employer.

Over the years, Chesman visited many orthopedic surgeons seeking relief from traumatic ankle arthritis. All they could offer was ankle fusion, which he decided against due to a risk of losing motion in his foot.

"Because I had flexibility, [doctors] recommended I take the pain as long as I could, and that's what I did for over 40 years," Chesman said.

About 10 years ago, Chesman began following the development of total ankle replacement online, but learned early procedures were not viable because they did not last more than a few years.

### **Newfound freedom**

A few years ago, Chesman's ankle began to deteriorate at a higher rate, and the arthritis was unbearable. He said his ankle would get so swollen he couldn't even tie his shoes.

After being referred to Dr. Vora, Chesman underwent the [INBONE II Total Ankle Replacement](#) procedure, which took less than two hours. He was in the hospital for one night.

"In the hospital, when I got out of bed, I could tell the moment I stood up that this was big," Chesman said. "Before, I would double over in pain from lying or sitting down then standing up, and that didn't happen."

"This was the right thing to do," Chesman said of the surgery, which took him out of work for five and half months while he healed and underwent physical therapy.

Today, Chesman is back at Metra and has even started walking 40 minutes from Union Station in Chicago to Water Tower Place twice a week. Before surgery, Chesman said it was a struggle to walk even a short distance. Now he enjoys walks with his wife, Elizabeth, and riding his horse and buggy around town.

"I still have some limitations, but this has been a life-changer," Chesman said.

Ankle injuries like Chesman's are common in Vora's practice. He said there are a lot of people who would benefit from total ankle replacement, but unfortunately not enough seek treatment.

"The Illinois Bone & Joint Institute is at the forefront of this technology and has established itself as the go-to place for this type of problem," Vora said. "We've made some tremendous strides and improved technology. It's satisfying beyond words."

To help prevent ankle injuries, Vora advises people to take care while walking on uneven surfaces and working on ladders, and to wear shoes that have traction.

If you do suffer an injury, Vora said it's better to seek treatment than not, especially if you cannot bear weight on your ankle or you experience severe swelling, throbbing, numbness or tingling that is not relieved by elevating the foot.

