

# 'The results were incredible'

## Doctor treats crippling hand disease using the tip of a needle

By Janelle Roghair



**After seeing his brother, Ken's results, Dan Nechvatal also sought the help of Gundersen Lutheran orthopaedic surgeon Kevin Rumball, MD, to treat his Dupuytren's disease. The results of his needle aponeurotomy procedure can be seen above.**

It's not unusual to find Ken Nechvatal of Bloomington, Wis., playing guitar in his band. It's a feat that doesn't seem all that impressive until you consider the two middle fingers on his left hand were once permanently bent at a 45 degree angle and stuck together.

Ken suffers from a condition called Dupuytren's disease. "Dupuytren's is common among people, like Ken, whose ancestors come from northern Europe," explains Gundersen Lutheran orthopaedic surgeon Kevin Rumball, MD. "It causes the tissue under the skin on the palm of the hand to shorten and thicken, bending the fingers in toward the palm."

"My fingers were so crooked I couldn't put my hand in my pocket and it was hard to carry things," Ken remembers.

Most people don't develop symptoms of Dupuytren's until they're in their 50s, but Ken began noticing lumps in his

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hand in his early 40s. His right hand got so bad that he had surgery near his hometown several years ago. The surgery required Ken to be in a cast for two weeks and go through six months of physical therapy. And, it needed to be repeated two more times.

"I have a lot of numbness and scar tissue in that hand and I still can't straighten my fingers all the way. I was pretty sure if I had the same surgery on my left

hand, I'd never play the guitar again," the 52-year-old says.

Ken started researching his options and found out about a procedure called needle aponeurotomy to treat Dupuytren's. A doctor he found in Peoria, Ill., told him that he could have the procedure much closer to home... at Gundersen Lutheran in La Crosse.

"During the procedure, we use a needle to basically divide the cord that's causing the fingers to pull inward," explains Dr. Rumball, who is the only surgeon in the area currently performing needle aponeurotomy. "The entire procedure, which we do in the Clinic, takes about an hour and patients usually see immediate results."

However, Dr. Rumball cautions that it's important for people to seek treatment early on. "There are times when the disease is too far advanced for us to be able to treat it with the needle, and then surgery is our only option," he says.

Ken visited Dr. Rumball for needle aponeurotomy on his left hand, and the results amazed him. "I left the Clinic with two band-aids on my hand and could fully bend and straighten my fingers right away," Ken shares.

"I had no pain, no stiffness...and I was playing my guitar in a matter of days. The results were incredible. It was like I never had Dupuytren's."

**To schedule an appointment and learn if needle aponeurotomy might be right for you, call Gundersen Lutheran Orthopaedic Surgery at (608) 775-2276 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 52276.**