What is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy?
Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy is a medical treatment in which the patient’s entire body is exposed to pure oxygen at above-atmospheric pressures. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy speeds healing in patients with problem wounds, decreases swelling in tissue, and contributes to the acceptance of skin grafts. Therapy may be prescribed in order to:

- Increase oxygen levels in your blood stream
- Help new blood vessels form in injured tissue
- Boost your body’s ability to fight infection and kill bacteria
- Reverse the toxic effects of poisons, such as carbon monoxide

What happens during the treatment?
Patients are placed in an enclosed oxygen chamber, where pure oxygen begins to flow. The hyperbaric medical technician will tell you when the pressure begins to rise. During this compression period, which lasts from 7 to 15 minutes, you may feel warm. While the treatments are painless, you may experience a sensation of fullness in your ears during the compression period similar to that when flying. At all times, the technician will be in sight, next to the chamber, instructing you on how to clear your ears and how to become comfortable. When the chamber has reached the pressure prescribed by your physician, the fullness in your ears will reduce and the chamber will return to room temperature.

Your treatment may last between one to two hours. During your treatment, you may watch television, listen to the radio, rest or sleep. Near the end of your treatment, the decompression phase begins and you may experience a popping sensation in your ears and your body may feel cool.

The after affects of treatment, if any, are mild and include a crackling sensation in the ears or a brief feeling of lightheadedness. If the crackling sensation continues, report this to the hyperbaric medical technician. As with all medical procedures and treatments, there are some side-effects that could result from exposure to hyperbaric oxygen. These are rare, and will be discussed with you in detail by a hyperbaric medical technician or physician before your treatment.

Physicians and technicians specially trained in critical care and hyperbaric medicine are treating patients with Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy in United Regional’s Wound Care Center, located in the United Regional’s Bridwell Tower. Business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.