

YOUR ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE BARIATRIC SURGERY PATIENT

A very important component of the success of any bariatric surgery patient is the support he or she receives from family and friends.

If you have a friend or family member who is suffering from morbid obesity and considering bariatric surgery as a treatment option, you know that traditional weight loss strategies haven't worked despite many years of trying. Your loved one may realize that treating this disease on his or her own is not possible and may require help at this time. Bariatric surgery may be the tool to help with weight loss and long-term improved health.

Many potential patients have fears and challenges about the process and consider the consequences very seriously before committing to having surgery. They also fear they won't receive support from family and friends. If you have reservations or concerns about someone you love pursuing bariatric surgery, you are not alone. This is common and can be addressed with education.

The following are just some of the many facts you should know about bariatric surgery. It is important for you to learn as much as possible about the surgery so you can be a supportive partner in the process. Understanding the risks and health benefits associated with bariatric surgery can only enhance your role in helping your loved one transform his or her health and life.



HEALTH BENEFITS

Morbid obesity is recognized as a lifelong chronic disease by the medical community and is associated with many other diseases and conditions, known as co-morbidities. Studies show that weight loss is important in effectively improving or resolving existing conditions or preventing future health problems. Bariatric surgery can effectively improve and resolve many weight-related health conditions such as:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Dyslipidemia/high cholesterol
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Depression
- Osteoarthritis of weight-bearing joints
- Joint pain
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Urinary stress incontinence
- Asthma and pulmonary conditions
- Reproductive health

Co-morbidities can be expensive to treat and are frequently significantly damaging to an individual's physical and mental health. Weight loss has been shown to provide both socioeconomic and psychological benefits.

A comprehensive clinical review of bariatric surgery data showed that patients (22,094 patients) who underwent a bariatric surgical procedure experienced complete resolution or improvement of their co-morbid conditions, including diabetes, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, and obstructive sleep apnea.¹

The usual obesity treatments (diet, exercise, and medication) have not slowed the increase in obesity. Studies show a nearly 100 percent failure rate during a five-year period for people who diet for weight control.^{2,3,4} In contrast, at least two-thirds of patients who undergo gastric bypass surgery are able to keep off at least 50 percent of their excess weight for 10 years or longer.^{5,6}

SIDE EFFECTS, RISKS, AND COMPLICATIONS

According to the American Society for Bariatric Surgery 2004 Consensus Statement, the operative morbidity (complications) associated with Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass surgery in the hands of a skilled surgeon is roughly 5 percent, and the operative mortality (death) is roughly 0.5 percent.⁷

For Laparoscopic Adjustable Gastric Banding, the same consensus statement reported that in the hands of skilled surgeons, the operative morbidity is approximately 5 percent, and operative mortality is approximately 0.1 percent.⁷

As with any surgery, there are immediate and long-term complications and risks. Your healthcare team can speak with you further about the benefits and risks. Possible risks and side effects can include, but are not limited to:

- Bleeding*
- Complications due to anesthesia and medications
- Deep vein thrombosis
- Dehiscence (separation of areas that are stitched or stapled together)
- Infections
- Leaks from staple lines
- Marginal ulcers
- Pulmonary problems
- Spleen injury*
- Stenosis (narrowing of a passage, such as a valve)
- Death
- Vomiting
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Gallstones
- Nausea, vomiting, bloating, diarrhea, excessive sweating, increased gas, and dizziness

* To control operative bleeding, removal of the spleen may be necessary.

HOW BARIATRIC SURGERY WORKS

- Having bariatric surgery will require many lifelong changes to diet and lifestyle.
- Bariatric surgery helps by restricting the size of the stomach, leading one to eat smaller portions and feel full sooner.
- It will also minimize the number of calories absorbed, which will contribute to significant weight loss and improved health.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your support is important. You can join your loved one and become a part of the decision-making process by:

- Attending a patient information seminar
- Attending a support group where you and your loved one:
 - Hear the experiences of others
 - Learn more about bariatric surgery, its risks and benefits
 - Have the opportunity to ask questions

Your support and encouragement are crucial in helping your loved one reach long-term success.

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