

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT METABOLIC AND BARIATRIC SURGERY

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What Is Weight Loss Surgery?

Weight loss surgery, also known as metabolic and bariatric surgery, is a weight loss treatment that is associated with reduced mortality and improved overall health and quality of life. It also helps you manage and prevent chronic medical conditions like type 2 diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, sleep apnea, cardiovascular disease, fatty liver disease, and cancer.

Surgery decreases the size of the stomach, resulting in changes in hormone levels that control hunger and appetite. This increases the feeling of fullness, decreases appetite, and promotes weight loss. Some procedures cause food to be less effectively absorbed by your body.

The 2 most common procedures are Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB) and sleeve gastrectomy. Both are minimally invasive.

How Can I Have a Successful Recovery After Surgery?

You should work with a collaborative care team that includes your primary care doctor, bariatric surgeon, gastroenterologist, registered dietitian, and mental health provider. They will help manage your overall recovery, including complications, diet, exercise, and mental wellness. You will need lifelong follow-up for nutritional support and to monitor for complications, ongoing weight loss, and depression.

What Short-Term Complications May Occur After Surgery?

Short-term complications are rare, typically occur within the first month, and may include:

- Intra-abdominal bleeding
- Anastomotic leak, which is rare but serious. Symptoms include stomach pain, fever, fast heart rate, and high white blood cell count.
- Bowel obstruction, which can occur after RYGB. Symptoms include stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, a feeling of fullness, and constipation.

Dehydration and constipation are common. Your surgical team will guide you in food intake, hydration, and constipation management to minimize symptoms.

Chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and thyroid disease should be closely monitored because medications may need adjustment after surgery and weight loss.

How Can I Optimize Weight Loss and Minimize Complications in the Long Term?

Diet management will help maximize weight loss, lower risk for weight regain, improve obesity-related diseases, prevent malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies, and reduce gastrointestinal symptoms (bloating, nausea, constipation, diarrhea). Tips include chewing food extensively,



eating slowly, and stopping when you are full. Supplementing 3 small, balanced, high-protein meals with healthy snacks is recommended. Consuming 1.5 liters of fluid per day, mostly clear liquids, will help prevent dehydration and constipation. Exercising will help maintain weight loss and minimize constipation.

How Can I Minimize Risk for Nutritional Deficiencies?

Nutritional deficiencies after surgery are common and treatable; the most common deficiencies include iron, folate, vitamin A, thiamine, vitamin B₁₂, calcium, and vitamin D. Eat a balanced diet, and take vitamins and supplements as prescribed. Let your care team know if you have new symptoms (fatigue, weakness, hair thinning, leg swelling or numbness, or shortness of breath).

Should I Consider Body Contouring Surgery to Remove Excess Skin After Weight Loss?

Some patients are bothered by excess skin after weight loss because it may cause itching, rash, pain, and reduced mobility. Do not consider plastic surgery to remove excess skin until 12 to 18 months have passed since weight loss surgery and your weight has remained stable for at least 6 months.

How Can I Take Care of My Physical and Mental Health After Surgery?

Long-term monitoring of physical and mental health is required for lasting success after surgery. Speak to your doctor if you are struggling with your mental health or a substance use disorder or if you develop other new symptoms after surgery.

Questions for My Doctor

- How much weight loss should I expect and how quickly will I lose weight after surgery?
- What dietary changes should I make after surgery?
- Will my medicines need to be adjusted after surgery?
- What vitamins or supplements should I take, and how often?
- How frequently should I follow up with my doctors after surgery?
- Are there any support groups that I can join?
- When can I begin exercising after surgery?

For More Information



MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007199.htm>

Mayo Clinic

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/bariatric-surgery/about/pac-20394258>