

Is Bariatric (Weight Loss) Surgery Right for You?

Bariatric surgery may be the next step if you remain severely obese after trying other weight loss methods or have an obesity-related disease.

Candidates for this surgery have:

- A BMI (body mass index) of 40 or more
- A life-threatening, obesity-related health problem (diabetes, severe sleep apnea, or heart disease) and a BMI of 35 or more
- Obesity-related physical problems that interfere with employment, walking, or family life
- Attended a VA weight management program with regular follow-up for 6 months - 1 year or a non-VA funded weight loss program that includes dietary counseling, portion control and an exercise program (i.e. Weight Watchers) for 2 years.

Is this surgery for you?

If you meet one of the above conditions, answer these questions. Your answers may help you decide if weight-loss surgery is right for you.

1. Are you aware that this surgery can have serious complications?
2. Are you aware that what you can eat will change?
3. Are you aware that sometimes this surgery fails?
4. Are you well informed about the surgery and its effects?
5. Are you determined to lose weight and improve your health?
6. Are you aware of how your life may change after the operation?
7. Can you adjust to chewing your food well and eating small meals?

Remember:

The lifestyle changes you will need to make after your surgery are very much like the ones you would make with a standard diet and exercise program.

Ask yourself:

1. Can I lose weight through diet and exercise alone?
2. Am I committed to lifelong medical follow-up?

There is no guarantee that you will lose weight and keep it off. Success is possible only if you follow your treatment plan and change your behavior. You will also need medical follow-up. You must commit to this for the rest of your life.

Once you decide that you want to have this surgery you will have the support of the Bariatric Team. The team includes:

- Primary care provider
- Nurse case manager
- Clinic director
- Dietitian
- Psychologist
- Surgical Team (surgery is performed at the VA Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska)

The Approval Process

The entire process may take up to a year. It begins with your primary care provider. H/she decides, with you, if you need to lose a significant amount of weight and if bariatric surgery is an option for you. H/she then refers you to the Weight Loss Evaluation Clinic. There you will see the nurse case manager.

The nurse case manager reviews your case. **If** you meet the criteria and there are no reasons why you should not have the surgery, s/he will schedule an appointment for you with the clinic director.

Reasons for not having surgery include:

- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Cirrhosis
- Kidney failure
- Active heart disease
- Lack of social support
- Failure to pass random drug screen
- Smoking (need to be smoke free for 6 months)
- Serious congestive heart failure

If the clinic director accepts you for surgery, you will need appointments for blood work and heart testing. Depending on your health, you may also see a lung or digestive tract specialist. Then you will meet with the dietitian and psychologist.

Approval

If you are approved for surgery, you will have a Tele-Med appointment with the surgical team in Omaha. This means you will meet with the team using video conferencing. A surgery date is usually set for within 2 months.

During this time you will:

- Have 2-3 more appointments with the dietitian and psychologist
- Meet with the surgical team either in Omaha or by video conferencing
- Have your pre-op workup that includes your medical history, physical, and lab work

Surgery

You will stay in Omaha for one week. You must bring someone with you who can stay with you after you are discharged until your follow-up appointment 3-4 days after surgery.

If you are interested in this surgery, talk to your primary care provider.