

Is Bariatric Surgery for You?

Bariatric surgery is used as an adjunct along with life style changes to combat obesity. Statistics indicate that there are over 300,000 Hoosiers that are obese. Obesity affects morbidity and mortality along with adding to disability, increasing medical costs and affecting quality of life. Obesity affects all kinds of disorders, such as:

- **Coronary artery disease**
- **Heart attack**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Type 2 diabetes**
- **Stroke**
- **Arthritis**
- **Asthma**
- **Sleep apnea**
- **Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)**
- **Low back pain**

To be classified obese, the BMI (body mass index), is 35-40. The BMI is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. It is an indicator of body fat that possibly could lead to health issues. Another indicator that a person is over weight is calculated by one being 100 pounds over weight according to that persons height and body build.

Bariatric surgery is a surgical procedure performed that has a goal of excess weight loss. To decide whether one is a surgical candidate, the individual must first be evaluated. This is usually done by a team of professionals who specialize in different areas. The team usually consists of a physician, surgeon, dietician and psychologist. The individual must be mentally and physically committed to the change they are about to undertake because gastric surgery is not a miracle cure. Dedication is a must! An individual must be ready to reduce caloric intake along with increasing physical activity.

According to The Mayo Clinic there are four types of surgery to consider.

- **Gastric Bypass**

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- Gastric Banding
- Vertical Banding
- Biliopancreatic diversion

Gastric bypass is when a small pouch is created from the upper part of the stomach, then a bypass is directed to the second section of the intestines. The area of the stomach is reduced to the size of a walnut and holds about an ounce of food. The food is directed to the second part of the intestines by passing the jejunum, where calories are usually absorbed. Limited intake usually results in weight loss. This type of surgery can be done by a laparoscopy, in which small incisions are made through the abdomen.

Gastric banding is when a surgeon inserts a band around the stomach and inflates it till it sections the stomach into two parts. The band is placed in the upper part of the stomach creating a small opening so food can get through. This band can stay indefinitely and can be adjusted as necessary. Vitamins and nutrients can still be absorbed in the intestines. This surgery can also be done by a laparoscopy.

Vertical banding is when a surgeon uses a stapler to section the stomach into upper and lower parts. It limits space for food and forces you to eat less. The upper pouch is smaller and then empties into the lower pouch. This procedure usually doesn't last in long term weight loss so it is used less.

Biliopancreatic diversion is where a portion of your stomach is removed. The small portion of the stomach is then connected to the small intestines, bypassing the duodenum and jejunum where most vitamin and nutrient absorption takes place. Thus it results in weight loss but there is a threat of malnutrition along with vitamin deficiencies. This type of by weight loss surgery is rarely used. (In gastric by pass, the surgery only avoids the jejunum so some nutrients do get absorbed in the duodenum.)

You may wonder if your insurance will pay for this surgery. The majority of insurance companies will pay for it if you meet the qualifications set by the National Institute of

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Health Guidelines. General guidelines indicate you must be greater than 40 on your BMI, have health risks or be over 100 pounds over weight.

Gastric bypass is for people who are unable to achieve weight loss by reducing calories and maintain a weight loss through exercise, and are severely over weight. Gastric bypass is not a miracle cure; you must be physically and mentally ready to undertake a new way of living. It is important to note that gastric bypass cannot be redone should you regain all your weight. Most probably you will have to re lose all the weight by reducing calories and increasing activity. You must be totally committed for the procedure to be successful. As always, if you have any questions or comments, eMail me at gheffelmire@dearborncounty.in.gov