

Introduction to Bariatric Surgery

If you're struggling to lose weight, even after making healthy lifestyle changes, bariatric surgery may be the right choice for you.

Bariatric surgery, also called weight loss surgery, changes your stomach, sometimes your small intestine.

So, you feel full sooner, eat less, and reduce your body's ability to take in fat and calories.

It's only done when healthy eating and exercise have not worked over a certain period of time. Or when you have serious health problems like heart disease or type 2 diabetes.

There are different types of bariatric surgeries. Which one you have depends on your weight and your health.

The most common bariatric surgeries are Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and gastric sleeve.

Both Roux-en-Y and gastric sleeve are permanent.

Roux-en-Y gastric bypass reduces the amount of food you can eat at one time and reduces how much fat and calories your body absorbs.

Your surgeon divides your stomach into two parts, sealing off the upper section from the lower.

Then they connect your upper stomach to the lower section of your small intestine.

This creates a shortcut for your food, avoiding parts of your stomach and small intestine.

This shortcut means your body takes in fewer calories and nutrients.

With gastric sleeve surgery, about 80 percent of your stomach is removed.

What remains is a long tube-like pouch about the size of a banana. In this surgery, nothing changes in your intestines.

Your smaller stomach can't hold as much food. It also makes less of the hormone that drives hunger so it reduces your desire to eat.

You can expect to lose weight steadily during the first year or two after bariatric surgery.

Bariatric surgery can improve your quality of life but it's not without risks.

Some risks of weight loss surgery include: dehydration, lactose intolerance, malnutrition, depression and anxiety, and dumping syndrome.

Dumping syndrome happens when your stomach dumps food too quickly into the small intestine.

Symptoms of dumping syndrome include nausea, diarrhea, stomach cramping, and hypoglycemia or low blood sugar.

Talk to your doctor about the risks before deciding on the best treatment for you.

Introduction to Bariatric Surgery

To find out if you're a candidate for weight loss surgery, you will go through an extensive screening process by your healthcare team.

You will meet with a surgeon, dietitian, and other specialists to make sure you're healthy enough for surgery.

You will also speak with a specially trained therapist to find out if you're mentally and emotionally ready for surgery, and willing to make lifelong lifestyle changes after surgery.

If you use tobacco, drugs or drink alcohol, you'll need to quit before you can be considered for the surgery.

This surgery is not for everyone. You must have a BMI, or body mass index, of 40 or more.

You may also qualify if you have a BMI of 35 or more and at least one serious health condition like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or sleep apnea.

Keep in mind weight loss surgery is permanent. You will need to change how you eat and exercise for the rest of your life to keep the weight off.

You will also need to take certain multivitamins every day for the rest of your life. Many people also take mineral supplements.

If you're considering bariatric surgery, talk to your doctor about the benefits and risks so you can make the choice that's best for you.