

Frequently Asked Questions

Will my health insurance pay for surgery?

We will put together a packet of information to submit to your insurance company. This packet will include a letter of medical necessity from the surgeon, clearance letter from your primary physician, nutrition evaluation, psychological evaluation, any other required pre-op evaluations, and diet history. Surgery is only covered if a patient does not have exclusions in their contract and if a case can be made that is medically necessary.

More information about insurance coverage can be obtained from your insurance company and we suggest you call them directly. Ask if you have benefits for morbid obesity. Unfortunately, some insurance policies have a clause that absolutely excludes coverage of weight loss surgery; there is little that can be done in this situation, short of changing insurance companies or self-paying for the surgery.

Is there an age limit for weight loss surgery?

The minimum age in our program is 18 years. However, there is no absolute upper limit. As long as you are physically able to withstand an operation and you fulfill the other criteria for surgery, you are a candidate. Practically speaking, we do not frequently perform this surgery on individuals over 65 years of age.

Am I a candidate for Bariatric surgery?

In general, if the patient is 100 pounds or more in excess of their ideal body weight or has a (BMI) Body Mass Index of 40 or more, and has not been successful in reducing their weight through controlled diets and/ or medications, he or she may be a candidate. If the patient has significant obesity-related medical problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or sleep apnea, and a BMI of 35 to 39, he/she may be considered a candidate for surgery.

What is Laparoscopic surgery?

Laparoscopic surgery uses a small camera in a tube known as a laparoscope. A small incision is made above the navel, and then a special needle is inserted through which carbon dioxide is pumped to distend the abdomen. The laparoscopic camera allows the surgeon to see inside the abdomen via a television monitor. Then, small-diameter surgical tools are inserted through other small incisions to allow the surgeon to perform the procedure. Patients enjoy smaller scars and slightly lower rates of post-op complications, than patients with open surgery. Patients typically have less post-op pain, require less pain medication and may recover faster.

What types of surgically assisted weight loss procedures do you perform?

Lap Band and Gastric Bypass surgery, both of which are performed laparoscopically.

Lap Band



The Lap Band procedure implements a restrictive method for surgically assisted weight loss. The Lap Band is an adjustable silicone elastomer band placed around the upper portion of the stomach, creating a small pouch. The placement of the band restricts how much the pouch can hold. Less food is taken in, which means fewer calories are ingested, hence weight loss. It also controls the rate which food particles exit into the rest of the stomach. The band can be adjusted, non-surgically and can also be removed if necessary.

Gastric Bypass (Roux-en-Y)



The Gastric Bypass procedure implements both a restrictive and malabsorptive method for surgically assisted weight loss. This operation restricts how much the stomach can hold. Less food is taken in, which means fewer calories are ingested. In addition, because a portion of the small intestine and the remainder of the stomach is “bypassed” and not utilized for digestion and absorption of nutrients, you will only absorb approximately 60% of the amount of food ingested, hence dramatic weight loss. Approximately 1 ½ to 2 years post-op, your body will compensate to absorb closer to 80% of the food you ingest. It seems it is the bodies “natural” way to slow down your weight loss at this time, as the majority of gastric bypass patients have reached their “goal” weight at this point.

How do I decide which procedure is best for me?

If you need to lose more than 100 pounds and if you tend to snack often, especially on “sweets”, the Gastric Bypass procedure may be a more appropriate choice. If you do not need to loss more than 100 pounds and your general problem is lack of portion control, and you do not have a “sweet tooth”, then the Lap Band procedure may be the more appropriate choice. We recommended that you visit some of the web sites listed below. In addition, your initial consultation with the surgeon, dietitian and psychologist, may help to clarify which procedure is best for you. We also recommend and **REQUIRE you to attend at least two of our support group meetings**. You will meet patients that have already had either of these procedures. Often times, other patients will offer insight on what to expect before and after surgery.

What are some possible complications of these surgeries?

Nausea/Vomiting

Abdominal pain/Gas and Bloating

Infection, bleeding or leakage at the surgical sites

Vitamin/Mineral/Protein deficiencies if you are not complaint

Temporary thinning of hair (*Gastric Bypass*)

Leak at the connection between the new stomach pouch and small intestine (*Gastric Bypass*)

Band slippage (*Lap Band*)

Dumping Syndrome (*Gastric Bypass*)

What is Dumping Syndrome?

After Gastric Bypass surgery, you will have to limit sugar and carbohydrate intake, as instructed by the dietitian (refer to handouts). If too much sugar or carbohydrate enter the small intestine at one time, you can experience symptoms such as: diarrhea, dizziness, stomach cramps, slight headache and nausea, and possibly heart palpitations. These symptoms can last up to 30 to 45 minutes.

What if I want to get pregnant after weight loss surgery?

We strongly suggest that you **wait at least 18 months after surgery to have a child**. And even after that, you must make sure that your obstetrician is aware that you had weight loss surgery. You should be closely monitored during the entire pregnancy.

If you had the Lap Band procedure you may have to the fluid in the band removed during your pregnancy. After delivery, the band can be readjusted.

How long will I be in the hospital after surgery?

The Lap Band procedure usually requires one day in the hospital and the Gastric Bypass usually requires two.

When can I return to work and drive?

Most patients can return to work and drive after their post-op office visit, which is 7-10 days after surgery.

Will I have to take vitamins?

Yes, and you will be given clear instructions from our dietitian.

Will I be asked to stop smoking?

Yes, patients are encouraged to stop smoking at least eight weeks before surgery.

Is there any difficulty in taking medications?

Most pills or capsules are small enough to pass through the new stomach pouch. Initially, your doctor may suggest that medications be taken in liquid form or crushed. You should consult with your pharmacist.

Can the band be removed?

Although the Lap Band is not meant to be removed, it can be. Surgeons report that the stomach generally returns to its original shape once the band is removed. After the removal you may soon go back up to your original weight. You may also gain more.

Can I still drink alcohol?

Alcohol has a high number of calories. It also breaks down vitamins. An occasional glass of wine or alcoholic beverage is not considered harmful to weight loss. You cannot drink alcoholic beverages which are carbonated, such as beer or champagne. This will be clearly discussed during your visit with our dietitian.

Can I bring a friend or family member to the support groups?

All potential patients and their adult family members or friends are invited to attend the meetings. We think that support group attendance is important for patient education and patient recovery.

Therefore, it is a requirement of our program that new patients awaiting surgery attend at least two support group meetings prior to their surgery date.

How long will it take before I can have surgery?

This generally is not a fast process. It depends on the patient's motivation to complete the necessary evaluations, and the insurance company. This varies, but it usually takes anywhere from three to six months.

What are some of the weight loss surgery web sites?

www.drferzli.com

www.spotlighthealth.com

www.obesityhelp.com

www.inamedhealth.com (lap-band information)

www.weightlossurgeryinfo.com

The American Society for Bariatric Surgery

www.ASBS.org

The American Society of Bariatric Physicians

www.asbp.org

American Obesity Association

www.obesity.org

North American Association

For Study of Obesity

www.naaso.org

Obesity Surgery Journal

www.obesitysurgery.com