

LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY FOR MORBID OBESITY AT LUTHERAN MEDICAL CENTER

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I a candidate for weight loss surgery?

A person who is 100 pounds over ideal body weight or has a BMI (body mass index) of 40 or greater, or a person who has a BMI over 35 and has associated health problems related to obesity, may be considered a candidate for surgery.

Will my health insurance pay for surgery?

Insurance coverage for morbid obesity surgery varies according to the insurance carrier. Call your insurance carrier and make sure your plan provides coverage for weight loss surgery, and that you have covered benefits for morbid obesity surgery. Please be advised that although you may have completed all the necessary steps in order to schedule surgery, your plan may not authorize it. Your insurance may request the name of the surgery and the CPT/ICD-9 codes. Insurance companies use the following codes to identify the type of surgery:

- Laparoscopic Gastric Banding: 43770
- Laparoscopic Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass: 43644
- Diagnosis Code (ICD-9) for Morbid Obesity: 278.01

Your call to the insurance company should be for information only. The surgery authorization process will be initiated by our office.

Is there an age limit for weight loss surgery?

The minimum age in our program is 18; however, there is no absolute upper limit. As long as you are physically able to withstand an operation and obtain the necessary clearances, you are a candidate. Practically speaking, we do not frequently perform surgery on individuals over 70.

What types of weight loss surgeries do you perform?

We perform Lap-Band, laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy.

- Lap-Band: The Lap-Band is an adjustable silicone band placed around the upper portion of the stomach, creating a small pouch. Less food is taken in, which means fewer calories are ingested, hence weight loss. The band can be adjusted (filled) non-surgically and can also be removed if necessary.

- Laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass: The gastric bypass has a dual role. It 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 are “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.
- Laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy: Laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy is a restrictive procedure that limits the amount of food you can eat by reducing the size of your stomach. During this procedure, a thin vertical sleeve of stomach is created using a stapling device. About 80% of the stomach is removed. This procedure limits the amount of food you can eat and helps you feel full sooner. The stomach, now shaped like a sleeve, will be the size of a banana. It allows for normal digestion and absorption. Food consumed passes through the digestive tract in the usual order allowing it to be fully absorbed in the body.

How do I decide which procedure is best for me?

Your surgeon, nutritionist, program coordinator and psychologist will help clarify which procedure is best for you. It is recommended that you attend at least two of our support group meetings as you will meet patients that have already had weight loss surgery.

How long will I be in the hospital after surgery?

The Lap-Band procedure usually requires one night in the hospital; the gastric bypass and the sleeve gastrectomy usually require two.

Should I lose weight before surgery?

Yes, it is important to lose weight prior to surgery. Preoperative weight loss reduces the frequency of surgical complications in patients undergoing weight loss surgery. Our nutritionist will assist you in reaching this goal.

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

We suggest that you wait for at least 18 months after surgery to have a child. However, if you have a Lap-Band, you can get pregnant within 6 months after surgery. You may, however, need to have the fluid removed. After delivery, the band can be tightened accordingly. Make sure that your obstetrician is aware that you had weight loss surgery.

When will I be able to return to work or exercise?

You should become active as soon as you feel ready. Most patients find they need 1-2 weeks of rest and recovery. It is recommended that you return to full exercise at 6 weeks after surgery. Significant exertion prior to that may prevent you from fully healing.

Can I regain weight?

It depends on the type of surgery. The Lap-Band provides a constant restriction on your stomach, however, you can affect how much you lose, or gain, by your eating habits. Weight loss continues for the first 3 years, but is directly affected by how tight your band is. If you eat sweets such as chocolate, ice cream or drinks with high calorie liquids, you will regain weight.

With the gastric bypass, weight loss continues for two years and then plateaus. Some patients, depending on the size of the stomach pouch and the type of food they eat, experience a 20-30 pound weight regain after two years.

Surgery is not a complete weight-loss solution; you must also follow your nutritionist's instructions about how and what to eat.