

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOLLOWING SURGERY

Can I drink carbonated beverages after surgery?

Many patients find carbonated beverages uncomfortable from the gas they produce, which also could cause some expansion of the stomach pouch. We ask that patients refrain from drinking all carbonated beverages after surgery to avoid this risk. In addition, these drinks often are high in sodium and have no nutritional value, so we recommend not drinking any of them, including those that are calorie-free.

Can I have alcohol after weight loss surgery?

Alcohol causes stomach irritation and can cause liver disease. During rapid periods of weight loss, the liver becomes especially vulnerable to toxins such as alcohol. You also may find that you become intoxicated more quickly and with less alcohol than you did before surgery. Researchers think this may be due to the way the body metabolizes alcohol. You may become more vulnerable to increases in drinking or drugs following weight loss surgery. There are many possible reasons for this. One reason may be a phenomenon known as addiction swapping, meaning that alcohol or drugs replace the food addiction now that you can no longer eat as much. Alcoholic beverages also are high in empty calories and may cause “dumping syndrome.” For these reasons, we recommend no alcohol for one year following surgery and very limited use of alcohol in the following years. Because of the potential for addiction, it is important that you be aware of the risks, signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse after surgery.

What is dumping syndrome?

The Roux-en-Y gastric bypass has the potential for “dumping syndrome.” If you eat high-fat foods or concentrated sugars, such as sweets, desserts or deep-

fried foods, the concentrated sugar or fat rapidly dumps into the small intestine. The body’s response is to try to dilute these sugars and fats by pouring a large amount of fluid into the bowel. Insulin often is rapidly released, as well. The combination of the extra fluid and insulin create a feeling of lightheadedness, clammy skin, fast heartbeat, nausea and a sense of needing to vomit or pass gas. Some people will feel abdominal cramping and these symptoms often are frequently followed by diarrhea. Avoiding these foods will prevent dumping.

Will I have to take vitamins for the rest of my life?

Vitamin and mineral supplements are critical to long-term success. You will need to take a multivitamin with 18 mg of iron twice a day, 1500 mg of calcium citrate or 2,000 mg calcium carbonate per day divided into three doses and 1,000 mcg of vitamin B12 daily. If you do not take supplements as recommended, it is likely you will develop deficiencies, which can lead to problems such as anemia, osteoporosis, low protein levels and other specific vitamin deficiencies. It will be important to have lab work done annually to monitor your levels of these vitamins and minerals. Our bariatricians will order these labs when they see you for your yearly appointment.

What is the problem with milk products?

Some patients report developing intolerance for milk or milk products after weight loss surgery. Milk contains a special sugar called lactose. In people who have lactose intolerance, this sugar passes through the stomach and intestine undigested until bacteria in the lower bowel act on it. Depending on individual tolerance, some patients find even the smallest amount of milk or milk sugar will cause cramps, abdominal discomfort, gas and diarrhea. Intake of milk may need to be avoided or restricted because it contains the highest concentration of lactose per serving. Cheeses, which generally contain much lower quantities of lactose, and other milk-based products, such as yogurt and cottage cheese, often are well tolerated.

Life After Weight Loss Surgery

Adding a commercially available enzyme supplement called lactase to the diet may be helpful. This supplement can reduce symptoms when added to lactose-containing food or taken with meals containing lactose. Among the commercial lactase preparations are Lactaid (tablets or liquid), Lactrase, LactAce, DairyEase and Lactrol. Talk with your primary care provider for more information on diagnosing and treating lactose intolerance.

Why can't I snack between meals?

Snacking can sabotage your weight control efforts. Snacking, nibbling or grazing on foods, especially high-calorie and high-fat foods, can add hundreds of calories a day to your intake while defeating the restrictive effect of your operation. Most snacking is done out of impulse rather than true hunger. Snacking will slow your weight loss and can lead to regaining some of your lost weight. Snacking also is a habit which is easier to avoid than to stop once started. If you do feel a need for calories between meals, try having an 8-ounce glass of skim milk.

Why do I need to drink so much water?

When you are losing weight, there is a heavy load of waste products to eliminate, mostly in the urine. Some of these substances tend to form crystals which can cause kidney stones. A high water intake protects you and helps your body to rid itself of waste products efficiently, promoting better weight loss. Water also will fill your stomach and help to prolong and intensify your sense of satisfaction with food. If you feel a desire to eat between meals, it is probably because you did not drink enough water in the hour before.

What role does exercise have in my post-surgical weight loss?

Regular exercise and physical activity are essential for long-term weight loss and prevention of weight regain. Visits with an exercise physiologist before and after

bariatric surgery will assist in developing a personalized fitness plan tailored to your individual needs and abilities. The benefits of exercise are many:

- helps you lose weight and keep it off
- helps your skin bounce back
- maintains and builds muscle
- keeps bone tissue dense and strong
- increases your strength, endurance, balance and metabolism
- boosts energy and mood

Patients who exercise regularly after surgery find that they lose weight more quickly and their exercise capacity improves dramatically. Muscle loss is something that can happen after bariatric surgery and something you want to prevent. Your body will tend to burn any unused muscle before it begins to burn the fat it has saved up. If you do not exercise daily, your body will consume your unused muscle, and you will lose muscle mass and strength. To prevent your body from using muscle mass for energy, you must work your muscles regularly.

Can I get pregnant after weight loss surgery? Will the baby be healthy?

Yes, you can, but it is recommended you wait at least 18 to 24 months after your surgery due to the possibility of nutrient deficiencies during the weight loss period. You will also need time to adjust physically and emotionally to your weight loss before becoming pregnant. It is important to practice effective contraception other than birth control pills during the weight loss period to avoid getting pregnant. With appropriate nutrition and vitamin/mineral supplementation, weight loss surgery does not cause growth or developmental problems for the fetus. In fact, studies find that women who have had weight loss surgery have improved pregnancy and infant outcomes compared to women who have severe obesity and have not had weight loss surgery.