



# Bariatric Surgery Guide

Dr. Stewart's Weight Loss Specialists of North Texas



## Welcome.

This resource is created for you by Dr. Stewart and our bariatric surgery team with input from people who have found success through weight loss surgery. It is not intended to replace consultation and follow-up by your weight loss surgeon. Always follow the instructions of your surgeon in preference to any information you find here. If you are in doubt, please ask. We are available at any time to help you achieve your weight loss and health goals.

**For more information, including tips on surgery preparation and adapting to your lifestyle post-surgery, visit our website [weightlosssurgeon.com](http://weightlosssurgeon.com).**

We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions.  
Visit us online at [weightlosssurgeon.com](http://weightlosssurgeon.com) or call us at **817.997.4560**.



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## Inside the Bariatric Surgery Guide

Morbid obesity is a complex problem that involves more than just numbers on a scale. In fact, the external symptoms of morbid obesity and society's focus on them often distract from many of the more dangerous problems that occur inside your body as a result of obesity. Issues like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease are the "silent" symptoms of obesity. Weight loss can help you avoid many of these health dangers and help add many active, happy years to your life.

**In addition to easing the medical symptoms that accompany morbid obesity, weight loss can give you:**

- **Increased energy**
- **Improved self-esteem**
- **Reduced need for medications**
- **Normal clothes shopping**
- **Increased flexibility**
- **New endurance for everyday activities**

Once you realize all the potential complications you face when you are morbidly obese, you have an important choice: Lose weight through traditional diet and exercise, or take the leap into weight loss surgery.

The unfortunate reality is that long-term weight loss through diet and exercise is not a practical or achievable solution for you if you are obese, no matter how dedicated you are to a restrictive diet and aggressive exercise plan. In the end, a traditional diet plan could hurt your health and self-esteem even more, and leave you feeling like a failure when the deck was actually stacked against you from the beginning.

Most dieters who are considered morbidly obese and do manage to lose weight with conventional diet and weight loss methods gain the weight back within five years. This is not true of those who undergo bariatric surgery. In 1998, the American Society for Bariatric Surgery found that up to 60% of bariatric surgery patients were able to maintain their weight loss for more than five years.

If you decide to take the step toward bariatric surgery, remember that it requires as much of a commitment from you as it would from weight loss through diet and exercise. As part of your commitment, you must be willing to eat substantially smaller portions, follow up with your surgeon on a regular basis, and accept the impact that this may have on your relationships.

The decision to have bariatric surgery is not one to be taken lightly, but for most of those who are considering it, there really is no other choice. Of course, deciding to have the surgery and being ready for it are two very different things. So your next step is to find out if you are ready for bariatric surgery.



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## Are You Ready for Bariatric Surgery?

Anytime you decide to have surgery, it is a big deal. Having your body altered during an operation is never a casual matter, but when you consider bariatric surgery, the commitment is even more intense. The ramifications of deciding to have bariatric surgery don't just affect you during the surgery and recovery period, but instead they kick off a string of changes that affect the rest of your life.

### Dietary Changes

Bariatric surgery forever changes the way you can eat. After surgery, individual meals will not be larger than one cup, and sometimes even smaller than that. Also, because you are severely restricted in the amount of food you can digest, you must make very healthy food choices every time you eat. To stay healthy, you must eat with the goal of meeting your body's nutritional needs within a limited meal size.

In addition to the restrictive eating, some surgeries will require you to commit to taking certain supplements daily. This is your safeguard against encountering a nutritional deficiency because of your new, reduced stomach size.

### Considerations for Bariatric Surgery

There are some very basic guidelines that can determine whether or not you are a good candidate for bariatric surgery. These include:

- **Your age.** Patients who are between 18 and 65 years old are the best candidates—although special permission can be granted for those who fall outside the age range.
- **Your Body Mass Index (BMI).** Having a BMI between 35 and 39.9 AND medical complications caused by obesity OR a BMI of 40 or more indicates a suitable candidate. Check your BMI. A BMI of less than 35 does not automatically exclude you from consideration. Dr. Stewart makes this determination on a case-by-case basis.
- **Your smoking preference.** Nonsmokers and those who do not drink alcohol excessively or take illicit drugs are generally good candidates.
- **Your dieting history.** Many insurance companies consider a documented history of failed attempts at structured weight loss programs as a necessary criterion.
- **Your commitment.** Patients who are ready to commit to permanent changes in lifestyle and are willing to regularly follow up with their doctor for a long period of time after surgery will have better long-term success.



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## Gastric Band Surgery

Of the restrictive weight loss procedures available, gastric band surgery is the simplest. During the surgery, an adjustable band is placed around the upper stomach. This band contains a hollow tube that can be filled with varying amounts of saline through a port under your skin. The more saline that goes into the tube, the tighter the band becomes around your stomach. This makes the band more restrictive, which makes you feel full and eat less.

The unique and simple design of the gastric band allows you to experience a much less invasive surgery with a shorter recovery time. Unlike gastric bypass surgery or duodenal switch surgery, no portion of your intestines is bypassed. This may not sound like much, but it is actually important in terms of nutrition absorption. With gastric band surgery, food is digested the same way as before and there is no concern over nutritional deficiencies as a result of malabsorption.

### Benefits of Gastric Band Surgery

- Gastric bands are adjustable. If you are planning to get pregnant, you can have some of the fluid removed from your band and allow yourself to increase your caloric intake. If you want to accelerate your weight loss, you can have the band filled so that it is tighter and you feel fuller.
- Your stomach and intestines are left intact and no permanent surgical changes are made.
- You will see an improvement in your obesity-related illnesses including diabetes and high blood pressure.
- You will have greater success in losing weight than you would through traditional diet and exercise, and with the adjustable band, you will be able to maintain it more easily.

### Potential Drawbacks to Gastric Band Surgery

- You could be one of the small percentage of patients who experience gastric band erosion, tubing problems or port problems. Or you may experience gastric prolapse, which happens when the part of your stomach that is below the band comes up through the band.
- Your insurance company might not cover the surgery.
- You may have psychological or physical problems with the band and may need it removed.
- You may not lose weight if you make the wrong food choices.

It is important to weigh the inconvenience of the drawbacks against the benefits of the surgery. Often, it is well worth a little extra gas to lose hundreds of pounds safely and effectively. To really determine whether gastric band surgery using the LAP-BAND® or REALIZE™ Band is right for you, you must consider the pros and cons of both gastric bypass surgery and duodenal switch.



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## Gastric Bypass Surgery

Gastric bypass surgery is one of the most highly publicized restrictive procedures for weight loss. Continual publicity makes it seem routine, but when you actually understand the surgery, you will realize that it is an invasive procedure that has long-lasting medical ramifications.

During gastric bypass, the stomach is stapled so that the top portion forms a small pouch with no access to the bottom, larger portion. The intestines are then cut and the part of the intestine no longer connected to the stomach is attached to the small pouch that has been formed at the top of the stomach. The remaining portion of small intestine is reattached to a lower part of your intestines.

Because of this, your small stomach pouch—the only part of your stomach that can accept and hold food—sends its broken-down food and nutrients into your modified intestines where they now spend less time being absorbed by your small intestines.

### Benefits of Gastric Bypass Surgery

- Having gastric bypass surgery can result in improved sleep apnea symptoms.
- The weight loss after gastric bypass can result in improved symptoms from obesity-related diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes.
- People who have gastric bypass experience better long-term weight loss results than obtained with traditional diet and exercise.
- You can enjoy fewer symptoms of gastric reflux and less osteoarthritis pain after surgery and weight loss.

### Drawbacks of Gastric Bypass Surgery

- If you do not eat properly after the surgery, you may experience dumping, which can occur when simple carbohydrates like sugar are consumed. Because simple carbohydrates are so easy to digest, they are dumped into the digestive system too quickly and can result in sweating, discomfort, diarrhea and cramping.
- Gastric bypass infrequently results in bleeding, infection, pulmonary embolism, scarring in the stomach, hernia and death as a result of surgery.
- You may be at risk for nutritional malabsorption and will need to take supplements daily.
- Surgery is reversible, but not often encouraged.
- You could have frequent bouts of gas and increased bowel movements.
- There is no guarantee that you will not gain the weight back.

The next step is to compare all the benefits and drawbacks of gastric bypass surgery and gastric band surgery with those of the duodenal switch. It is important to remember that every weight loss surgery will have some drawbacks, but often the benefits of weight loss surgery far outweigh the drawbacks of the surgery.



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## Duodenal Switch Surgery

The third type of weight loss surgery is duodenal switch surgery. Duodenal switch, like gastric bypass, is a more invasive surgery than gastric band surgery.

During the surgery for duodenal switch, part of your stomach is removed until only a banana-shaped portion is left. Then an intestinal bypass is completed which bypasses up to 70% of your small intestine. Because this large area of the intestines is bypassed and no longer contributes to the path food takes through your body, the digestive enzymes produced by your pancreas and duodenum have less time to work on the food you eat.

The key to duodenal switch's success in helping you lose weight lies in the forced malabsorption of food. While your stomach is smaller and does help reduce your appetite, the fact that your small intestines are partially avoided and your enzymes are diverted means that you absorb and digest fewer calories of the food you eat.

Like any surgery, there are both pros and cons to consider.

### Benefits of Duodenal Switch Surgery

- You could be among the 96% of people with diabetes who have duodenal switch surgery and see a resolution or improvement.
- 90% of duodenal switch patients see an improvement in their blood pressure.
- 80% of duodenal switch patients see a resolution or improvement in their sleep apnea.
- In addition to significant weight loss, you could be among those who maintain up to 85% of their total weight loss for 10 or more years after the surgery.
- Duodenal switch offers greater weight loss than other surgeries.
- You may see a marked improvement in any pain you have that is caused by osteoarthritis. You may also have gastric reflux less often.
- If you have had trouble with fertility, you may find that after surgery you are finally able to conceive. Remember to discuss conception with your surgeon before you attempt to get pregnant.

### Drawbacks of Duodenal Switch Surgery

- It is possible that leakages could occur immediately post-operatively at the site where the stomach is reconnected to the bowel. This is monitored very carefully during your recovery.
- Pulmonary embolism, inflammation of the pancreas, infection, hernia, narrowing of the connection from the stomach to the intestines, bleeding, and occasionally death can occur during and after surgery.

It is important to remember that the risks mentioned above have a very low rate of occurrence. Successful surgery and post-surgery weight loss happen the majority of the time. When you are deciding whether or not to have surgery, it is always important to weigh the risks in relation to the benefits. Often, the benefits far outweigh the risks.



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## Gastric Sleeve Surgery

The final weight loss surgery procedure we are going to discuss is called gastric sleeve surgery. You may also hear this surgery referred to as sleeve gastrectomy, vertical gastrectomy, restrictive vertical gastroplasty, or vertical sleeve gastrectomy. Gastric sleeve surgery involves stapling your stomach to make it smaller, and then removing the unusable portion.

In gastric sleeve surgery, no section of your intestines is bypassed, so there is no nutrient malabsorption. In addition, the section of your stomach that is removed is the section that is responsible for the creation of the "hunger hormone," ghrelin. That means that you lose weight because your food intake is restricted and you feel less hungry because you no longer produce ghrelin.

Gastric sleeve is performed as a stand-alone weight loss surgery and is the first part of a two-stage operation for obese people considered a high risk for surgeries like gastric bypass and duodenal switch. In this case, the gastric sleeve surgery is performed first. When sufficient weight loss has occurred, duodenal switch surgery, or sometimes gastric bypass, is performed as the second stage.

One decision facing you and your surgeon is whether gastric sleeve or gastric band surgery is more appropriate for you. There are benefits and drawbacks to each.

### **Gastric Band**

- A reversible procedure
- May need to be adjusted over time
- Band may slip or erode tissues
- Soft foods with high calories may slip through the band and cause weight gain

### **Gastric Sleeve**

- Not reversible
- Needs no adjustment
- There is no band to slip or erode tissue
- Since part of the stomach is removed, foods cannot "slip through"

Studies have shown that between two and four years after gastric sleeve surgery, most of the people who have had it have lost as much weight as those who have had gastric bands.





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## The Week Before Bariatric Surgery

The week before your surgery is a time filled with excited anticipation, and perhaps the nagging worry that any pre-op surgery patient feels. Many questions run through your mind and you may begin to feel overwhelmed.

There are many things that you can do to feel in control of the procedure you are about to have. While you must rely on the skill of the bariatric surgical team on the day of surgery, you can take your fate and success into your own hands by following all the proper pre-op instructions.

### **1. Avoid or restrict the drinking of carbonated beverages**

Carbonated beverages are infamous for causing gas. You need to limit the amount of these beverages you drink during the week before surgery so you do not have any additional gas or associated discomfort.

### **2. Avoid or restrict the amount of alcohol you drink**

After your surgery, your liver may become extremely sensitive. Because alcohol damages the liver and is considered a toxin, you could be setting yourself up for pain and further liver damage by drinking during the week before your surgery.

### **3. Practice breathing and coughing**

Being under anesthesia can increase your risk of pneumonia, so coughing after surgery to expel mucus is extremely important. However, because of the nature of your surgery, you won't be able to cough as you normally do. So you need to practice splinting your abdomen with a pillow. Simply place the pillow over your abdomen and your hands on top of that, put a little bit of pressure on the abdomen, and then cough. Practicing this before surgery is a must. It is also important to consciously breathe deeply. Fill your lungs with air and hold it for three seconds. Release the air with force as though you are blowing out a candle. Practicing each of these techniques three or more times a day during the week before surgery will help make it easier once surgery is complete.

### **4. Adjust your medications**

Your doctor will discuss with you any changes you need to make in your medications during the week before surgery. But in general, you should stop taking any blood thinners, herbal medications that thin blood, or pain relievers with aspirin. You should also stop taking vitamin E and all appetite suppressants.

### **5. Eat only clear liquids until midnight**

You can eat a normal breakfast on the day of your surgery, but after that you must take nothing but clear liquids like water, gelatin and popsicles until midnight. After midnight, you cannot take ANYTHING by mouth other than the medications you have been instructed to take.

### **6. Pre-admittance**

You will need to complete your hospital pre-admittance several days before the surgery. At that time you will have lab work, a chest x-ray and an EKG. If you become ill in the days before surgery, notify your doctor so that he or she can ensure you are safe for surgery.





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## Support Groups

Having a support group to turn to when things get rough is extremely important for weight loss success. Your support group should be filled with people who understand what you're going through because they've experienced it. These individuals will have tried-and-true methods for success.

No one can make you attend a support group meeting. Find a way to fit them into your schedule and actually attend them. If your schedule is packed, try a group that meets online.

### Benefits of Support Group Meetings

#### 1. Firsthand experience

The people in your support group are your peers. They have firsthand experience with the same weight loss issues and surgery you've gone through. There is no more valuable and trusted resource than someone who truly understands your situation.

#### 2. Education

From expert guest speakers and doctors to other weight loss surgery patients, your support group should be filled with knowledgeable people who can educate you on nutrition, pain management, exercise and motivation.

#### 3. Help solving problems

You may encounter problems or challenges that you didn't anticipate. Individuals who have already experienced those challenges can help you prepare for them.

#### 4. New friends

After weight loss surgery, you might have to end relationships that aren't good for your health and weight loss success. These relationships, while dangerous to your health, might also be emotionally painful when they end. Your support group can offer an entirely new group of friends who are not only invested in your success but who are also seeking their own. It's a mutually beneficial relationship to which you certainly have something important to offer.

#### 5. Success

Years of research have proven that people who are active in a weight loss surgery support group have more success in losing the weight.

The preceding guide serves as an overview of bariatric surgery. More information is available at our website [weightlosssurgeon.com](http://weightlosssurgeon.com).

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