

Bariatric *focus*

HELPING PATIENTS STAY FOCUSED ON WEIGHT LOSS EVERY DAY

Ongoing support helps produce the greatest level of success for patients in their life after weight loss surgery

The importance of Support in Bariatric Surgery

For someone going through weight loss surgery, the significant changes in diet and lifestyle will last a lifetime. And those who surround themselves with people who understand them and support their goals will have a greater chance of long-term success.

Weight loss surgery patients should help friends and family members understand why they have chosen a surgical weight loss solution. Many people are under the impression that weight loss surgery is an experimental obesity treatment rather than one with more than 40 years of history, or that it is an easy way out. Explaining to people around them that morbid obesity is a disease and that diets don't work for most is very important.

People who are morbidly obese often report that their spouses, or others close to them, seem to discourage weight loss. These people see the weight as part of their identity. This is a fear of change. Some of these people will even go as far

as trying to sabotage their success by pushing the wrong foods or large amounts on them. Having a frank open discussion about this and explaining to them that obesity is putting their health at stake may allow patients to enlist those close to them in helping them during and after weight loss surgery.

Attending support groups provides weight loss surgery patients an excellent opportunity to discuss their various personal and professional issues. Most learn, for example, that weight loss surgery will not immediately resolve existing emotional issues or heal the years of damage that morbid obesity might have inflicted on their emotional well-being. In addition, by surrounding

themselves with people who share their situation, they can ask questions and receive answers in a supportive environment, share recipes and exercise tips from knowledgeable friendly people, and know that someone is always there for them for help and support.

It is important for patients to know that they are not alone and to feel they have the full support of their family and friends. Most bariatric surgeons who frequently perform weight loss surgery will reinforce the fact that ongoing post-surgical support helps produce the greatest level of success for their patients in their life after bariatric surgery.

"I frequently tell our patients that 90 percent of their long-term success is in their hands, not mine," says Dr. J. R. Salameh, Medical Director of the Bariatric Surgery Center at Virginia Hospital Center. "Surgery is only a tool; they have to use it well and for that, they need a lot of support."

Support Group Meeting

Thursday
18
Our next gastric banding support group meeting is Thursday, June 18 at 7 pm. Plan to attend!

FINDING SUPPORT ON-LINE

Many websites provide online support groups and forums for weight loss surgery patients. Look for forums specific to the surgery you had done, i.e. Lap Band. You can read the posts, ask questions, share your experiences and learn from the experiences of many other patients.

- o www.obesityhelp.com
- o www.lapbandtalk.com
- o groups.yahoo.com

Be careful though! Not all information you read and advices you get online should be trusted. Use sound judgment and, if need be, ask your surgeon's office.

"You might never believe that a year ago, at age 22, my cholesterol was dangerously high and I needed to lose 100 pounds. I was shocked to learn I was at risk of heart disease. I was also scared for my mother who also struggled with excess weight. So, my mom and I shared a heartfelt moment and decided to take action to conquer our life-long battles with weight — together. A year later, we're so happy we did."

- Caitlin Van Zandt
Actress "Guiding Light" and "The Sopranos"

February 2009
Caitlin and Barbara
Van Zandt

