

# Bariatric *focus*

HELPING PATIENTS STAY FOCUSED ON WEIGHT LOSS EVERY DAY

*You Need To Be Aware Of Why This Happens And What Can Be Done To Fix It In Case It Becomes An Issue*

## **Will I Have Loose Excess Skin After Weight Loss?**

If you watch plastic surgery extreme makeovers on TV you have surely seen a few patients who have had surgery to "repair" their skin after a significant weight loss. This must have led you to wonder if you will experience the same thing.

Certainly not everyone who loses a lot of weight will have a problem with "hanging" skin. There are many factors that determine how much loose skin an individual will have following weight loss. The most important determinant is probably age as skin naturally becomes less elastic as it ages. The older you are when you lose weight, the less likely it is that your skin will "snap back" to its original shape. The next most important factor is the amount of weight loss. An individual who loses 250 lbs. is likely to have more excess skin than somebody losing 80 lbs. Other less important variables include complexion, amount of sun exposure received over a lifetime, heredity and whether somebody is a smoker. Fair skinned people in general tend to develop more loose skin than darker individuals. Sun worshippers tend to sustain more tissue damage over the years and consequently more loose skin following weight loss. Some people tend to have "better" skin than others of

similar complexion and lifestyle. This may be the result of hereditary factors that are not readily apparent. Finally, smoking breaks down collagen, a major component of skin and other structural components of the body. Smokers develop more loose skin than their non-smoking counterparts. Essentially, having loose skin is one of those things that varies from person to person and frankly, you will not know if it's a problem or not until it has actually happened.

Most people who lose 100 pounds (or more) will have a certain degree of excess or "hanging" skin upon reaching their goal weight. This excess skin is usually in the areas of the body where they used to carry most of their excess weight such as the belly. Very rarely does this excess skin cause a medical issue such as skin infections. It is mostly a cosmetic issue and for most patients, it not significant enough to warrant having something done about it.

If you have a lot of excess skin that is an issue for you and want to have it removed, then you will be referred for a body contouring or body lift surgery which consists of a number of cosmetic surgery procedures that lift and tighten skin at various locations on the body. Each individual patient usually determines what they are bothered about and then consult with a plastic surgeon to correct the



problem. The most common procedures requested by weight loss patients are tummy tucks, neck lifts (for people who are too young to have a full face lift), arm lifts, thigh lifts, breast lifts (with or without implants), and lower body lifts. Several operations might be needed to achieve a satisfactory overall body contour and these operations are often performed one procedure at a time with at least three months between operations. These are serious operations and like other surgeries, pose serious risk of complications. Insurance rarely covers these types of procedures.

Body contouring procedures should be considered only after ones weight has stabilized after bariatric surgery. This can range from 12 to 36 months, depending on an individual's preoperative weight and the type of bariatric surgery performed.

The bottom line? Worrying about the likelihood of having loose skin is no reason to put off losing weight. Losing weight will leave you healthier and will most likely lead to a longer, fuller life.

*Other Questions From Our Patients:*

### **Will I Lose My Hair After Weight Loss Surgery?**

After weight-loss surgery, hair loss can result from the stress of the surgery as well as from the shock to the body from rapid weight loss. A third of patients who had gastric-bypass surgery for instance have reported hair loss. This however never leads to baldness and normal hair growth will eventually return. To help prevent hair loss, eat plenty of protein and take vitamin supplements. Biotin is one supplement that helps to restore hair and renew hair-cell generation. To quickly regrow the hair, incorporate a healthy diet, exercise, vitamins and proper hair care into your lifestyle. Worrying about the lost hair will only cause more stress that eventually leads to more hair loss.

### **Support Group Meeting**

Thursday

**18**

Our next gastric banding support group meeting is Thursday, March 18 at 7 pm. See you there!