

A Guide to Weight Loss Surgery

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Overview

Losing weight can be one of the most difficult challenges a person can face. Experts at the Surgical Weight Loss Center at Lahey Hospital & Medical Center (LHMC) are here with you every step of the way to make sure your weight loss journey is a positive one.

Our multidisciplinary team – comprised of surgeons, nurse practitioners, dietitians and psychologists – provides weight loss solutions that are personalized to your needs and goals, helping you achieve long-term results. Since 2000, our program has provided patients with the support, knowledge and tools needed to lose weight safely and change one's life.

Is Weight Loss Surgery Right for You?

Weight loss surgery (also known as bariatric surgery) is a safe, effective treatment option for people with morbid obesity who have been unable to lose weight and/or maintain weight loss on their own.

You may qualify if you:

- Are 18 years old or older
- Have a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or greater, or
- Have a BMI of 35 or greater, and one or more conditions related to obesity, such as diabetes or sleep apnea

Benefits of Weight Loss Surgery

Although weight loss surgery is an effective tool for achieving a healthier weight, other benefits of surgery include:

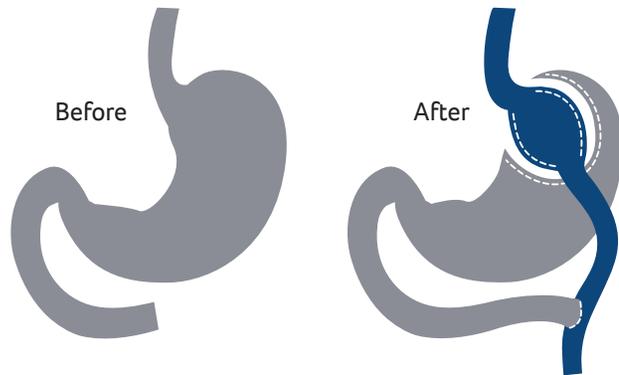
- Improving or reversing some obesity-related conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnea and joint pain
- Extending life expectancy by improving overall health
- Improving quality of life, including increased energy and mobility
- Improving your self-image, mood and psychological health

Types of Weight Loss Surgery

Weight loss is different for everyone, which is why we offer a variety of minimally invasive surgical options. Minimally invasive surgery uses five to six small incisions and usually results in shorter hospital stays, faster recovery times and less post-operative pain than traditional open surgical procedures. All of our surgeries can be completed through these small incisions, except in very rare cases. We offer several surgical options, and you and your surgical team will determine which type of surgery is right for you based on your medical history.



Laparoscopic Gastric Bypass (Roux-En Y)



The gastric bypass is a procedure in which the stomach is reduced to the size of a small pouch to help control portion size. The small bowel is connected to this pouch, completely bypassing the portioned-off section of the stomach.

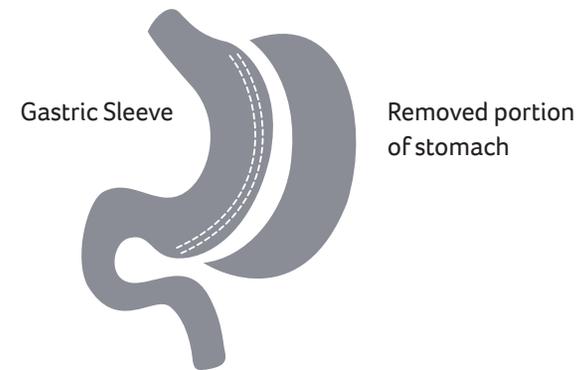
Benefits:

- Rapid weight loss following the procedure
- Average weight loss of 60 to 70% of excess body weight
- Restricts the amount of food that can be consumed
- Best surgical option for people with diabetes or acid reflux

Risks:

- More long-term risks than sleeve gastrectomy due to changes made to the small intestine
- Requires adherence to dietary recommendations and life-long vitamin/mineral supplementation

Laparoscopic Sleeve Gastrectomy



The sleeve gastrectomy involves permanently removing the outer part of the stomach, creating a banana-shaped stomach pouch. This decreases the amount of food that the stomach can hold by about 90% and speeds the delivery of food to the intestine, which can impact hormones that help with hunger control and diabetes control.

Benefits:

- Rapid weight loss following the procedure
- Fairly similar weight loss as a gastric bypass
- Restricts the amount of food the stomach can hold
- Does not require a bypass or re-routing of the food stream

Risks:

- Is a non-reversible procedure
- Can make heartburn or reflux worse
- Is less effective in curing diabetes compared to the gastric bypass
- Requires adherence to dietary recommendations and life-long vitamin/mineral supplementation

Laparoscopic Duodenal Switch

This procedure is not as commonly performed, and only a few centers offer this surgical option. This is an effective option for the most obese patients, typically those with a BMI of 50 or higher, or for those with poorly controlled diabetes. In this operation, a sleeve gastrectomy is combined with an intestinal bypass resulting in a combination of restriction and malabsorption of food and caloric intake. A sleeve gastrectomy can also be revised to a duodenal switch if an individual has regained weight or would benefit from further weight loss or improved diabetes control.

Benefits:

- Results in greater weight loss than other surgeries
- Average weight loss of 80% of excess body weight
- Highest success with eliminating obesity-related conditions, such as diabetes

Risks:

- Has a higher complication rate
- Has a much greater risk for nutritional deficiencies and requires a greater number of vitamins following surgery and for the rest of one's life
- Can cause frequent, loose, smelly bowel movements

Revisional Surgery for Adjustable Gastric Bands

About half of the patients that have the laparoscopic adjustable gastric band do not lose enough weight, experience weight gain, or develop other problems such as reflux or difficulty swallowing. In these patients, the band can be laparoscopically removed, and a gastric bypass or a sleeve gastrectomy performed instead. The hospital stay, recovery and weight loss is similar to non-revisional surgery. These operations are frequently performed with excellent results.

Frequently Asked Questions

Pre-Surgery

What are the risks of weight loss surgery?

All medical treatments, including surgery, have risks. The risk of death is low (1 out of 1,000), less than the risk of death with common surgeries such as gallbladder surgery or joint replacement surgery (1 out of 400). However, six months after surgery, the risks of dying from obesity-related problems are higher than the risk of dying from obesity surgery.

The most common short-term complications are nausea and dehydration (5–10%). Less common are leakage (1%), bleeding (1%) and blood clots (less than 1%).

Long-term complications are related to the type of surgery you have. Patients that have gastric bypass can have ulcers (2%), blockage or twisting of the intestine (2%), and vitamin and mineral deficiencies (2%). Patients that have the sleeve gastrectomy can experience heartburn about 20% of the time.

Complication rates at LHMC are even lower than these national averages.

Is bariatric surgery covered by insurance?

Our surgical weight loss program accepts most insurance plans. However, it is important to check with your insurance provider to make sure that your policy has coverage for bariatric surgery.

Will I need to lose weight before surgery?

Typically we ask that you lose about 7 to 10% of your excess weight (for example, 7 to 10 pounds for somebody 100 pounds overweight). This may be different from patient to patient based on your weight and how you carry your weight. This preliminary weight loss makes for an easier and less risky surgery and will be discussed with you at your initial consultation.

What psychological supports does LHMC offer to support behavior change and success?

Our team has developed many preoperative and postoperative supports to help with behavior change. All patients attend a set of four classes before surgery to support mindful eating behaviors and address emotional or stress eating triggers. If needed, there are additional classes focused on emotional, stress, and binge eating or individual counseling sessions to address your areas of struggle. We also offer monthly support groups as a venue to interact with other patients who are pursuing surgery or have had surgery.

How soon can I schedule my surgery?

Time to surgery from initial consultation can depend on several factors including health status, demonstration and understanding of healthy lifestyle changes, and insurance requirements. The quickest progression to surgery is typically three months.

Post-Surgery

How long will I be in the hospital after surgery?

Since all weight loss surgeries performed at LHMC are minimally invasive, most patients only spend one or two nights in the hospital.

How soon can I get back to my normal activities?

While every patient is unique, most patients can return to normal activities and work about two to three weeks after surgery. Dietary recovery usually takes four to eight weeks after surgery.

What follow-up will I need after surgery?

Weight loss surgery is a lifelong commitment. To make sure you stay on the road to weight loss success, we require that you see members of our team

frequently in the first month, but then every three to six months for a year or two, and then annually after that.

Can I regain weight after surgery?

Surgery is a tool to be used in combination with healthy eating and exercise habits. Our team helps patients learn these valuable skills to be successful. However, 20% of patients can regain a significant portion or all of their weight back long term after surgery. Research shows that regular follow-up with your surgical weight loss team, in particular, a dietitian, can support greater long-term results.

At LHMC, we also have a comprehensive medical weight loss team that can help our patients stay on track with/achieve weight loss goals or help support patients who struggle with weight regain.

Will I need plastic surgery after weight loss?

Some patients experience loose, sagging skin after significant weight loss. If extra skin causes rashes or increased back pain, skin removal surgery may be an option. This procedure is not always covered by insurance, so our team regularly documents reasons why it is medically necessary, if possible. Our skilled plastic and reconstructive surgery team at LHMC has significant experience with body contouring procedures following extreme weight loss.

How Do I Get Started?

If you're ready to take the first step toward weight loss success, attend a free information session. We offer evening sessions monthly in Burlington and Danvers, with occasional sessions in Gloucester and at other satellite sites. We also offer an online information session, which you can watch at your convenience from your home or office.

To learn more or to register for an information session, visit Lahey.org/WeightLossSessions or call 855-934-4488.

What Our Patients Say

"I was apprehensive about the bypass procedure at first, but the top-notch care team at Lahey earned my confidence through their professionalism, education, support and authentic care. The team really treated me well; they weren't just going through the motions. The nurse practitioners, psychologists, surgeons and interns all gained my trust and eliminated any fears I had."

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"Surgical weight loss changed my life big-time. I feel like I make better choices in eating, I feel like I'm more active. I feel more energy. I feel happier. Without the Lahey surgical team and all the changes I went through, I would probably be still struggling to lose weight."

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To learn more or to register for an information session, visit [Lahey.org/WeightLossSessions](https://www.lahey.org/WeightLossSessions) or call 855-934-4488.