

# Weight Loss Surgery Fact Sheet

## OBESITY

- Body Mass Index (BMI) is the primary, standardized method of assessing obesity. It can be measured by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared.

$$\frac{\text{Weight in kilograms}}{\text{Height in meters}^2}$$

- A person with a BMI greater than or equal to 25 is considered overweight; a BMI of greater than or equal to 30 is considered obese; and a BMI greater than 40 is extremely (or morbidly) obese.
- The World Health Organization and other prominent health organizations have called obesity an "escalating epidemic."

## THE SURGERY

- Weight loss surgery should be considered if a person has a **BMI of 40 or greater** or a **BMI of 35 or greater with significant obesity related conditions** such as diabetes, high blood pressure, acid reflux, or sleep apnea.
- In the last five years, the number of weight loss surgeries has doubled to about 40,000 annually.
- Gastric bypass is a major operation that seals off most of the stomach to decrease food intake and also, re-arranges the small intestine to reduce the calories the body can absorb.
- The gastric bypass may be performed using laparoscopic techniques - through keyhole or small surgical incisions. The benefits of this approach include reduced recovery time and post-surgical pain.

## BENEFITS

- Weight loss achieved after gastric bypass averages 100 pounds and is largely maintained over a 10 year period.
- Within one month of surgery, most people with diabetes are cured of the disease and require no further medical treatment. They remain cured after 10 years.
- High cholesterol, sleep apnea, high blood pressure, and acid heartburn (reflux) are often cured or markedly improved after surgery.
- Many morbidly obese people are on permanent disability. Following weight loss surgery, most people can return to work.

## RISKS OF OBESITY

- There are more than 30 obesity related health risks. Obesity is a known risk factor for diabetes, high blood pressure, acid reflux, heart disease, osteoarthritis, gallbladder and liver disease, sleep apnea, stroke, and some cancers.
- Cancer of the breast, uterus, ovaries, prostate, and colon are more than twice as likely to occur in an obese person.
- A BMI greater than 35 increase the risk for diabetes 93-fold in women, and 42-fold in men.
- Obesity contributes to the death of an estimated 280,000 adults annually.
- Obesity is one of the most common causes of preventable death in the U.S.

## RISK OF WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY

- Approximately one third of weight loss surgery patients develop gallstones. To reduce the risk of developing gallstones, patients are prescribed supplemental bile salts for the first 6 months after surgery.
- Nearly 30 percent of patients develop nutritional deficiencies, such as anemia or osteoporosis. Deficiencies can be avoided if vitamin and mineral supplements are taken regularly.
- Ten to 20 percent of weight loss surgery patients require follow-up operations to correct complications such as abdominal wall hernias, or breakdown of a staple line.
- Gastric bypass may cause "dumping syndrome" when stomach contents move too rapidly through the small intestine. This is uncomfortable and causes symptoms such as nausea, weakness, sweating, faintness, and occasionally diarrhea.