

## **Life after Weight Loss Surgery. What You Can Expect.**

Bariatric surgery is a weight loss tool.

That's worth repeating: bariatric surgery is a weight loss tool. Why do we stress this point so strongly? Because it's important that you fully understand every aspect of what to realistically expect after surgery. This includes what is required of you to succeed. It is unreasonable to expect that a person could eat poorly, lead a sedentary life and still have a healthy weight. Bariatric surgery is like most things in life— you get out of it what you put into it.

However, the idea of surgery being a tool, and not a magic cure for obesity, shouldn't scare you away. If anything, it should make the idea even more appealing. Why? Because it's proven to be a very *effective* tool. And in the world of weight loss struggles, effectiveness is very rare indeed.

The principle behind it is simple. We know weight loss occurs when more calories are expended than are taken in. The surgery helps to decrease the amount of that intake. So your body will then turn to its stored fat to make up the difference. And weight loss begins almost immediately. But it needs to be maintained.

So, to build on that momentum, the Barix program takes you beyond immediate weight loss to a bigger goal: permanent weight loss, and good health to go along with it. The program provides guidance for making permanent changes in your eating and activity habits that improve your overall health and help you reach your weight loss goals.

By taking the personal responsibility to follow the recommendations, and use available supports, you are in effect using the tool of weight loss surgery the way it was designed to be used, and you will succeed.

As we continue to discuss what you can expect after weight loss surgery in this article, we will include some candid comments from patients. These comments are excerpts from the Barix Clinics Store forums in the "What to Expect" section.

**For the first few months following surgery**, patients need foods and liquids with a high concentration of protein. This will continue through the first year. During this period, they begin to learn and apply new healthy eating patterns. They exercise, and start to adjust to the changes that take place in the body. Very often during this phase they do not feel hungry or have any interest in food. They may experience a heightened sense of smell. Some sail through this period with an incredible amount of energy, a sense of joy and excitement, and a commitment to a new and healthy lifestyle...

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*A month and 2 days ago I had my surgery. I cannot be any happier than I am. I have already lost a total of 35 lbs. I feel more confident in myself than I ever did. My own family can't believe the results already and are surprised with my attitude and energy level. Being a preschool teacher and being extremely over weight put a toll on me. When I went back to work this past Monday, my kids, co-workers, and the parents noticed a big change in me too. They like the new me! –Jennifer*

For others, the struggle with the adjustments may postpone the excitement for a while longer...

*My surgery was three weeks ago Monday. I had my follow up with my surgeon last Friday. He was pleased with my healing and my progress so far. By Friday, I was down 16 pounds. So far I'm hanging in there... not too tired yet. Overall, still pleased that I had the procedure. My co-workers and family say they can tell I've lost weight, but I don't see it yet. –Pam*

**The first year following gastric bypass surgery** is an exciting time, as weight continues to come off quickly. Other adjustments continue as well: a new way of eating, a smaller body size, and new opportunities for physical activity, to name a few. Healthful lifestyle habits are beginning to take root, setting the stage for reaching and maintaining weight loss goals...

*I am almost one year post-op and 16 pounds from goal. I exercise about 3 days per week. No way would I have even walked 3 days a week a year ago. I just returned from vacation where I ran on the beach with my husband. I would like to run a 5K this summer. This surgery has been life-saving and life-changing for me. –Kelly*

If patients work to incorporate healthful lifestyle habits, these should be firmly established by the one-year mark. The weight loss achieved will be in direct proportion to the effort made to follow the program. By this time many post gastric bypass patients find that they can eat more. They may not have the same reaction to foods high in added sugars. If not kept in proper check, it could lead to a situation like the following:

*Since I had weight loss surgery in November, I have found that I am able to eat more than I should. I haven't been keeping myself accountable, and it has shown. I have really let emotional eating take over for me in the last 8 months. I've gained about 20 lbs. back of my original 140 lb. loss!!! And now instead of being 20 lbs. away from my original goal... I'm 40.*

– Heidi

So to avoid overeating, successful patients sometimes use restrictive eating techniques to control hunger. These include only eating  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of food at a time, eating six small meals, and choosing foods that provide a fuller feeling. Applying these and other suggestions allows the weight loss to continue “on schedule.”

*It really isn't hard keeping it off if you stay to everything Barix has taught us. I will admit it is sometimes hard to get in the 6 meals a day. Sometimes it might be a handful of grapes or a*

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*cup of yogurt but I do try. I have seen people in the support group who have gained some back but usually they know how and even why they have gained. –Kathy*

*I am (almost) 10 years post-op. I lost a total of 155 lbs - still feel GREAT! This is truly the best thing I have ever done for myself and/or my family. –Dee*

## **Overview of the Barix Program**

Below are the general concepts and recommendations of the Barix program. Once you've had the surgery, your personal Barix nutritionist will provide the comprehensive details.

**Adequate fluid intake** is essential to good health. Sip your drinks. Taking fluids before you eat, and 20-30 minutes after you eat, will prevent the drinks from overfilling the pouch, flushing foods through the pouch, or giving you a sense of satiety before you've had enough nutrition. The majority of this fluid should come from water or other calorie-free options.

**Adequate nutrition.** Because volume is limited, it is especially important to choose foods that will provide your body with the nutrients it needs. The Recovery Nutrition Guide and the Barix Eating Guide will help you choose foods and vitamin supplements that will properly fuel your body and encourage weight loss.

**Six small meals** provide adequate nutrition, increased energy, and improved hunger control. You'll learn to take smaller bites and chew longer. Most meals should take at least 20 minutes to consume.

**Increased activity** is essential for healthful weight loss and weight maintenance. Studies indicate that a very brisk 30-minute walk or equivalent, in addition to daily activities, is sufficient for most people during the weight loss phase. The weight maintenance phase may increase it to a 60-minute walk daily.

## **Available Resources**

As a member of the Barix "family" you will have many resources available to you. These will prove to be valuable in helping you maintain a positive outlook throughout your weight loss journey. They include:

- Family/Friends/Co-workers
- Group Practice Staff
- Barix Support Groups
- Barix Clinics Connection
- Barix Forums
- On Track With Barix Monthly Support Letter
- Barix Buddies
- Recipes
- Daily Healthful Tips
- Healthful Habits

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## **Taking Responsibility**

Your weight and health depend on all of the choices, big and small, that you make each day. It may mean planning ahead and packing healthful foods for lunches and snacks, getting up 30 minutes early to walk, making a sugar-free dessert to take to a gathering, walking away from the candy on a co-worker's desk, putting dinner in the slow cooker before you head out to work--the list goes on and on.

Your success will depend upon your willingness to make healthful lifestyle choices and re-commit to your goals every day. The choices that you make today will determine if you reach those goals tomorrow

Committing to the Barix program will promote your emotional well-being as well. Your personal sense of self-worth will be reinforced by your daily resolve to be healthier and happier. If you ultimately determine that weight loss surgery is right for you, we're certain you'll find that every effort you make to stay close to the Barix weight loss program from that day forward will be worth it.

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