

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GASTRIC BYPASS SURGERY

If I'm instructed to drink/eat only water, broth and Jell-O just after my operation, does that mean I can have Diet Coke and Pasta?

NO!!! Water, Broth and Jell-O means just that and nothing more!

If my bowel function has not returned by the time I leave the hospital, when can I look forward to my first bowel movement?

Bowel function usually returns by the 3rd to 5th day but it may be delayed for a few more days. Stools may be liquid at first but will firm up over a few days.

I don't think I can exercise (even slowly walk) for a ½ hour the first week after surgery, is that OK?

Some of you may not be able to walk for ½ hour straight for a while after the operation. It depends on many factors. The important thing is to go out and try to do a little more each day.

Is nausea a common problem after the Gastric Bypass?

Nausea is a complex problem involving receptors from the stomach and the brain as well as emotional mediators. People who get motion sickness or women who had "morning sickness" seem to get post-operative nausea more often. If you eat too fast or take too big of a bite you will also be sick. A more common problem is to "spit up" white, frothy fluid. It may seem as if it lasts forever but it generally goes away in a few weeks or so for the unlucky few who get it. Be patient, follow the rules and keep your intake of liquids up. Avoid your vitamins a little while "as well as anything else that might aggravate the situation". If it goes on for long enough, we may try some medication, but we don't jump to them first since all medications can have ill effects and the nausea usually resolves in time without anything.

How much pain should I expect after the operation?

Everyone is different but there are some general guidelines. The incision sites continue to change and mature for months. Some scars hurt though most do not. Rubbing some lotion (any type will do) into a tender scar may act to desensitize it. Massage it several times a day. Obesity puts quite a strain on abdominal wounds, so don't add more stress before the wound heals for 4 to 6 weeks. Aches and pains should be expected around tubes and drains for several weeks as well.

Will I be able to eat normally again?

Normally is now a relative term. Most people (after 6 months or so) don't feel like social outcasts at parties or when they go out for dinner. Keep the rules in mind. Eat the first ½ of your meal as protein then the other ½ healthy vegetables, fruits and grains. Eat slowly and chew very well. Don't revert back to your old habits of social eating or gulping big bites rapidly. Use your Restaurant card (identifies you as a Gastric By-pass patient unable to eat normal

quantities of food) to request portions appropriate for you. Share with a friend, order an appetizer or order from the child's menu.

When can I drive?

Driving is a medical as well as medical/legal situation. Obviously, if you are on mind-altering drugs (including narcotics) or if you have inadequate mobility due to pain, you are not safe to drive. Beyond those two factors, it generally takes 2 to 6 weeks to be safe to drive if you were safe before surgery. Please ask your surgeon at the time of your first post-operative office visit.

What do I do if constipation becomes a problem?

Since you eat smaller amounts of food, you will have smaller amounts of stool formed. This can lead to constipation. Some people find it handy to take 2 or 3 tablespoonfuls of Milk of Magnesia every few days to help the process. Certainly drinking plenty of water is very important and nothing works well for constipation if your water intake is poor. It is not uncommon to have a bowel movement every 2 to 3 days once you get regulated. Check with your surgeon for his recommendations.

What about my other medications? When do I start them?

Your surgeon will inform you as to if and when medications should be started. Be sure to discuss this issue with him during your first follow-up appointment. If you are a diabetic, you may decrease your diabetes medications quickly after surgery. It is important for you to check your blood sugars frequently post-operatively.

What about vitamins after surgery?

You will need to use vitamin supplements for the rest of your life. Chewable Centrum is one recommendation. Your doctor may recommend additional supplementation of calcium and iron.

Will staples you use in surgery interfere with special tests I might need later?

The short answer is no. The staples are very small and often can't even be seen on a regular x-ray. The small pieces of metal are very non-reactive and they get imbedded in scar tissue. Tests like CAT scans, MRI's, Upper GI series, and Ultrasounds are generally not a problem.

Why can't I drink carbonated beverages or caffeine after surgery?

Carbonated beverages will fill your stomach pouch with gas, which will be painful and not allow you to fill your pouch with healthy food. Caffeine acts as a diuretic and may predispose you to dehydration; it also promotes peristalsis of the stomach muscles, which is undesirable in bypass patients.

Will I have excess skin after my weight loss?

It is difficult to predict which patients will experience excess skin after Bariatric surgery. Factors which influence this include genetics, pre-surgery weight, length of time obesity was experienced, post-op exercise habits and diet and hydration levels. Compression garments are available to hold excess skin and cosmetic surgery is an option, although insurance companies rarely cover it.

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