

"Ask A Doctor" article

### Is Bariatric Surgery Right for Me?

**Bariatric surgery** (often referred to as weight loss surgery) can be very effective for people who need to lose excessive weight and have been unsuccessful at other weight loss efforts. Bariatric surgery can take several forms, all of which are designed to reduce the size of the stomach. The best candidates for surgical bariatric procedures are individuals who are severely obese with a body mass index (BMI) over 40 or a BMI of 35 or more if suffering from certain medical conditions such as diabetes or other conditions specified by insurance companies. You can determine your BMI by simply entering your height and weight in a BMI calculator commonly found on the Internet or by consulting with your health care provider.

Before bariatric surgery can take place, patients must have a thorough physical evaluation and undergo psychological testing to ensure they are in good health for the procedure. Special lab tests, sleep studies, and/or heart studies may be required. Patients will also see a dietitian and physical therapist to help establish healthy eating and exercise choices before and after surgery. Your diet will be limited to liquids for several weeks after the procedure.

There are several methods and techniques used in bariatric surgery, however, most people and surgeons prefer a minimally invasive procedure such as laparoscopic surgery to reduce recovery time. With laparoscopic surgery, the surgeon gains access through small incisions in the stomach and inserts a tiny camera into the incisions to perform the procedure. **The Roux-en-Y** (or gastric bypass) is a procedure that both restricts the amount of food that can be taken in at a single sitting, and also reduces the body's ability to absorb calories. **Sleeve Gastrectomy** is a procedure that restricts the amount of food that can be taken in at a single sitting, by reducing the volume of the stomach. **Gastric Banding** is a procedure that restricts the amount of food that can be taken in at a single sitting, via an adjustable band that constricts the upper stomach to reduce its size.

Most bariatric patients are hospitalized four to five days following an open procedure and one to two days after a laparoscopic procedure and return to work and normal activities within a week or two following their surgery. After surgery, patients often lose 75% of their excess body weight within 12-18 months. However, it's very important to work with your surgeon and other health care professionals to ensure a realistic and successful outcome.



Steven T. Weiland, M.D., F.A.C.S  
is a Bariatric Surgeon with  
Surgical Associates, S.C., Wausau