



The Remarkable Health Benefits of Weight Loss Surgery



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Many of us are familiar with the dramatic weight loss that can be achieved through weight loss surgery, also called bariatric surgery.

However, losing weight is just one of several health benefits that can result from weight loss surgeries, such as gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy and adjustable banding.

"While these bariatric surgeries can lead to a trimmer body and an increase in self-esteem, many people who struggle with their weight don't realize how many diseases can be effectively treated through weight loss surgery," says [Scott Shikora, MD](#), Director of the [Center for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery](#) at Brigham Health.

According to Dr. Shikora, the field of bariatric medicine now places more emphasis on the health benefits of weight loss surgery than they have in the past.

“I now tell my patients about the health benefits of bariatric surgery first, and then we talk about how much weight they can expect to lose,” says Dr. Shikora.

Weight Loss Surgery Treats Many Diseases

After undergoing bariatric surgery at Brigham Health, approximately 75 percent of patients lose half of their excess body weight or more and maintain that loss over the long-term. This, in turn, can lead to a number of secondary health benefits.

Some of the health conditions patients may expect to improve or even resolve as a result of weight loss surgery include: type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and sleep apnea. The list, however, extends well beyond these health issues.

According to a wide body of evidence, weight loss surgery has been shown to dramatically improve the following health conditions:

- Asthma
- Depression
- Gout
- Heart disease
- Infertility (in women)
- Osteoarthritis
- Fatty liver disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Type 2 diabetes

Research also shows that obese patients who undergo weight loss surgery are at a lower mortality risk of heart attack or stroke than those patients who undergo more conventional treatments for their weight condition. They are also at a decreased risk of developing certain cancers.

Many patients with type 2 diabetes experience significant improvement within days after bariatric surgery. In many cases, the disease can go into remission. [Gastric bypass](#), in particular, has been shown to be extraordinary in its ability to improve or even cure diabetes.

“More than 90 percent of patients who have been diabetic for a few years and who are taking medications, but not insulin, can expect to leave the hospital with normal blood sugar and be off all of their medications within days of surgery,” says Dr. Shikora.

The breadth of health benefits that come as a result of weight loss surgery is something that Dr. Shikora sees frequently. A recent patient of his underwent a [sleeve gastrectomy](#) and quickly achieved normal cholesterol and blood pressure levels. In addition, the patient’s sleep apnea resolved, and his diabetes went into remission.

Weight Loss Surgery Can Improve Quality of Life

With a combination of weight loss and improvements in overall health, many patients experience significant improvements in their quality of life. Many patients report that they have more energy, move more easily, sleep better and have fewer aches and pains.

“Quite simply, I’m convinced that qualified candidates who opt to have bariatric surgery end up living longer and having a better quality of life,” says Dr. Shikora.

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