

BEHAVIOR CHANGES BEFORE SURGERY

Before your surgery you need to make a conscious effort to develop new patterns and behaviors that will be required post-operatively. These changes include physical and mental changes that will be lifelong and help to ensure your success after the bypass or the band.



Change your view on the word DIET. It no longer means deprivation it now stands for.

- **Developing Intelligent Eating Techniques**

1. **Practice eating slowly and chewing well.**

Your rhythm of eating will be drastically changed with surgery. Practice taking a bite of food, putting the utensil or food down, and chewing your food until it is soft and mushy. Notice the texture, taste, and aroma of the food. This will take a lot of focus the first few months after surgery so it is easier to practice before surgery. You should be leaving about one minute between bites. Bites should be small (about the size of a dime).

Chewing Exercise #1

Notice how fast you eat. How many times do you chew each bite? Try chewing each bite 15 times before swallowing. Then try 20 times. Work up to 30 if possible, (it may not be depending on the food). Use your tongue to roll the food around in your mouth and feel the texture. It should be smooth and mushy like baby food. You will have to chew like this the rest of your life.

Chewing Exercise #2

Measure one tablespoon of a food like tuna salad. Set the timer for 5 minutes. Use a small spoon to take a bite and put the spoon down. Chew it thoroughly. Wait one minute, take another bite. It should take 5 minutes to eat the tablespoon of food. Next, do the same thing with a cracker. Chew each bite so it melts in your mouth before swallowing. Put the cracker down and wait between bites. Did it take 5 minutes?

2. **Start paying attention to your level of hunger before eating and fullness after a meal.**

It takes 30 to 40 minutes for nerve and hormone signals to travel from your stomach to your brain to let you know to slow down or stop eating. Full is when you are no longer feeling physical hunger i.e. stomach growling/empty. How does it feel to eat just enough to take away the hunger and not one bite more? It may take you several months before you figure out what full feels like after surgery. If in doubt, measure your food until you get visually used to the new portion sizes. Start developing the mind-body connection.

3. **Practice sipping and not gulping drinks.**

It will take about one hour to sip an 8 ounce cup of fluid immediately after surgery. Practice sipping all day with a sport top water bottle or sippy cup (the fluid should come out easily). Gulping fluids may cause you to throw up or have severe pain in your chest. Drinking will speed up naturally over time. Some people are able to drink 8 ounces in 15 minutes after the first month. It is okay to use a straw after the first month of surgery. However, this may cause some people to swallow too much air and get gassy, so use at your own risk.

4. Start eating three meals daily.

You will be developing a normal eating pattern with this surgery. The human body needs fuel every 3 to 5 hours. You are only consuming 600 to 800 calories the first few months. Your body needs nutrition to heal! This is not a diet program, it is a major surgery. Skipping meals can actually cause more gas and increase appetite causing you to eat too fast.

5. Practice eating meals without drinking fluids.

If you are drinking two or more cups (one cup = 8 ounces) with meals, then start cutting back NOW. Reduce by ½ cup (4 ounces) each week until surgery. If you are drinking four cups, reduce by 1 cup per week. **After surgery, you cannot drink 30 minutes before a meal, during, or 30 to 45 minutes after a meal.** Food will form a plug in your pouch. It slowly empties with the pull of gravity and some peristalsis. Drinking fluids on top of this plug may cause you to throw up or can wash food out of your pouch allowing you to eat more. This is a behavior to keep for life although there will be some changes once your body has healed and adjusted to its new configuration. This will be discussed later after surgery.

6. Start cutting down on caffeine.

If you currently take in a lot of caffeine, start tapering off now. Caffeine is a gastric irritant and should be avoided for the first few months after surgery. This is very important as you will not be given caffeine while you are in the hospital and may develop a headache as a result. Start with replacing ¼ of your regular cup of coffee with decaf instead. After 4 days, replace regular coffee with half decaf. After 8 days, replace regular coffee with 75% decaf. After 12 days, all decaf. After surgery, moderate caffeine intake is okay. Moderate is defined as **one to two 5 ounce cups of regular coffee a day, three to five 5 ounce cups of regular tea.**

7. Organize and prepare meals before surgery.

Start planning post operative meals now. You can puree meats, vegetables, fruits, soups, etc. ahead of time. Freeze them in ice cube trays and store in ziploc freezer bags. Heat up as needed. Utilize fat free gravies for meats to help moisten them. Make sure to label the contents of your freezer bags with a marker or labels. Clear your home and work of any trigger foods so you are not tempted to indulge after surgery when you may be feeling a little overwhelmed.

8. Purchase your vitamin and protein supplements before surgery. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!!

Take your vitamin/protein supplement shopping list with you so you don't forget anything. Start taking your multivitamin and calcium before surgery to help correct any mild

deficiencies you may already have. Remember, taste changes may occur following surgery, so avoid buying protein supplements in bulk pre-operatively.

9. Take before and after pictures.

Many people do not like taking pictures but this can often help your mind adjust to the rapid changes over the first year after surgery. The mirror can be deceiving and patients often have problems seeing the weight loss. You never have to show your pictures to anyone. Also, you may want to save one original article of clothing to take your picture in at one year out. Pants are one of the more popular choices. This may make it easier for you to SEE the difference a year can make.

10. Have a good support system in place.

There are many adjustments to make after surgery. People will react to you differently. Spouses, friends, and/or significant others may feel threatened by the smaller you. Have a good friend, family member, clergy member, therapist, etc. to talk to and help you work through various issues. Online support groups like OSSG (obesity surgery support groups) and websites like obesityhelp.com are often very helpful. Support group meetings help reinforce new behaviors and keep you motivated. We strongly suggest coming to support group meetings during your first year after surgery. Research shows patients that do are more successful. REMEMBER, this surgery does not change why you ate, how you ate, your desire to indulge in your favorite foods, or the hectic lifestyle that has led many to develop eating styles that promote obesity.

11. Start your physical activity program now.

Physical activity is an important part of your new healthy lifestyle. It keeps your heart, lungs, and muscles strong as you age. If your feet hurt, buy a chair aerobics video or get in the water and walk. Walk daily as far as you can while still being able to walk and talk. Increase your time by two minutes each week working up to at least 30 minutes daily. If you can only do a few minutes, do that two or three times throughout the day. Get a strength training video and some inexpensive dumbbells at a sporting goods store and start toning your muscles. Even if you are eating well, you cannot maintain weight loss without exercise.

12. Practice taking deep breaths.

This will help strengthen your lungs, which is especially important for former smokers and asthmatics. You will be given a spirometer (a plastic breathing apparatus) at the hospital prior to surgery. Use it faithfully for the few weeks before surgery and for at least two weeks after surgery. Ten good “puffs” every hour that you are awake is optimal. If you are unable to get your spirometer before surgery, we will give you one at the hospital the day of surgery. In the mean time take deep breaths through your nose and let your lungs fill all the way down into the bottom of your chest. Slowly release the air through your mouth. Using your spirometer, taking deep breaths and coughing are important after surgery to clear your lungs and help prevent pneumonia.

13. Start replacing your soda with non-carbonated, sugar-free, caffeine-free beverages.

After surgery, carbonated beverages are NOT recommended. Carbonation tends to make patients feel bloated, cause you to feel the need to belch, and gassy. Some patients can eventually drink carbonated beverages and some never do. Pour them over ice and let them sit for awhile before you try sipping them.

14. Journal

Write down all the reasons you are having the surgery and what you currently can't or won't do because of your weight. These are now your goals. Mark them off as you reach them. At the end of your first year you can celebrate all your successes. Document your journey and write down what you are feeling along the way. Enjoy the journey!

15. Take your body measurements once a month

We will keep track of your weight and BMI at the office. Take your measurements once before surgery and then every month after surgery.

Usual places to measure are:

- a. upper arm
- b. chest
- c. waist
- d. hip
- e. upper part of the leg.

Track your progress. Be sure to write down the date. Inches are just as important as pounds. You can go down several sizes without showing significant weight loss. This means you are losing fat mass which is the goal. We are trying to preserve muscle mass with eating enough protein and exercise. Your weight may plateau during the year and this is normal. Sticking to your new eating behaviors and guidelines with regular follow up in our office will keep you on track. If you choose to weigh yourself at home, limit it to once per week. Weighing yourself more often can become a distraction to your success.