

Everything you wanted to know about bariatric surgery, but didn't know whom to ask

Bariatric surgery helps to reduce around 20 to 25kg of excess weight right after the operation and in the first month following it. But is this really the solution you should be opting for if your only health problem is that you're slightly overweight?

Written by [Anjali Jha](#) | New Delhi | Updated: July 30, 2018 3:07:38 pm

Is bariatric surgery the only solution if your only health problem is that you're slightly overweight. (Source: Getty/Thinkstock Image)

It's commonly referred to as weight loss surgery and bariatric surgery is often sold as a one-time solution to everything health issue-related to obesity. The first ever bariatric surgery happened accidentally in 1952 in the USA, but only made its way to India between 1999 and 2000. Dr Sanjay Borude, consultant Bariatric surgeon at SL Raheja Hospital in Mumbai says that it was initially as rare as once in three months that patients were showing up for the surgery. Nowadays, he says, they operate on up to three patients a day.

This surgery can help reduce around 20 to 25 kg of excess weight right after the operation and in the first month following it. Studies also show that patients suffering from diabetes and hypertension witness a noticeable

reduction. But is this really the solution you should be opting for if your only health problem is that you're slightly overweight?

Age and weight limits

It's not that anyone can just walk into a hospital and ask for this surgery. There are certain physical and health requirements that you have to meet, to qualify for the surgery.

According to Dr Jaydep Palep, HOD of bariatric and minimally invasive surgery at Nanavati Hospital in Mumbai, "Anybody who has a BMI (body mass index) of more than 37.5 kg/m², or a BMI of more than 32 kg/m² with 1 obesity-related illness is a candidate for weight loss or metabolic surgery. Certain severe uncontrolled Type II Diabetics with a BMI of more than 27.5 kg/m² are also candidates for surgery as per the latest IDF (International Diabetes Federation) guidelines".

The general age limit for female patients in India is 11 to 12 years of age, or once their body has developed completely. Male patients have to be 17 years old. The upper age limit is usually up to 70 but if the patient is healthy and has a high life expectancy, this limit could be pushed. However, Dr Barude does tell us about his youngest patient who was an 11-month infant and an 11-year-old girl who was ashamed of her weight and was often bullied in school for it.

Major lifestyle changes

Dr Aparna Govil Bhaskar, consultant bariatric and laparoscopic surgeon Global, Apollo, Currae and Namaha Hospitals from Mumbai told

indianexpress.com how patients find it difficult to deal with the new dietary restrictions which come into place and often require constant counselling.

“Our entire team consists of surgeons, a dietician, a therapist and a counsellor. We start prepping the patient right before the surgery and make them understand how their life is going to change after it. They often get disturbed and sad seeing their loss of appetite for which counselling is provided for around a year to help the patient cope with the lifestyle changes which are unavoidable,” she said. Not just that, often patients also lose their interest in food.

People who are considering opting for a bariatric surgery should be prepared for the loss of appetite post-operation, along with constant constipation and even a constantly runny stomach. Every bariatric surgery patient has to keep consulting the doctor every month, and after six months there is a post-operative check every three months to keep a check on their nutritional level, etc. The operation has a long-term follow-up routine as well.

While it is not known as a form of cosmetic surgery, approximately 10 to 12 per cent of patients who undergo bariatric surgery do so for purely cosmetic reasons, says Dr Raman Goel, Bariatric & Metabolic surgeon at Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai. He also defended this option of using this type of surgery as a quick-fix way to lose weight, saying, “It helps girls to get married and young men bag great jobs. If a professional is overweight, then the employer forms a perception that the guy is lazy.”

Bariatric surgery usually costs around Rs 2.5 lakh to 3 lakh or more above.

If not bariatric surgery, then what?

Bariatric surgery is a means of helping patients deal with diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, hormonal imbalance and obesity. However, if somebody wants to go under the knife purely to lose weight, patients may need to find out more about the permanent lifestyle changes that such a surgery demands. And then weigh the options between surgery, and simply observing a strict diet and workout routine, before deciding.

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