



Associate Professor

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## Bariatric Surgery

Also known as weight loss or metabolic surgery, bariatric surgery is a proven treatment approach for the management of excess weight, obesity and diabetes. The goal is for patients to lose most of their excess weight, treat associated illnesses such as diabetes or high blood pressure and experience a healthier and improved lifestyle. Bariatric surgery includes a variety of different surgical procedures, generally performed laparoscopically (key-hole surgery) which all work in slightly different ways to help improve and enhance weight loss. Bariatric procedures can generally be categorised as “restrictive”, “malabsorptive” or a combination of both. Deciding which procedure is right for you can be challenging, and your surgeon will explain all of your options and offer a recommendation that is tailored to your needs, your weight and your previous history.

The most common procedures in Australia are the Laparoscopic Sleeve Gastrectomy, Laparoscopic Adjustable Gastric Band and Laparoscopic Gastric Bypass. There are also other procedures available for patients with particular needs.

## About Obesity

Obesity is a treatable disease that is a worldwide health concern associated with having an excess amount of body fat. It is caused by genetic and environmental factors and can be difficult to control through dieting alone. Obesity is diagnosed by a healthcare provider and is classified as having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or greater.

Bariatric surgery is a safe and effective treatment option for those living with severe obesity and for some living with obesity combined with other obesity-related conditions. These procedures are recognised for the metabolic and hormonal changes that have a role in hunger (wanting to eat) and satiety (feeling full). They also play a role in the improvement and/or resolution of conditions that can occur as a result of obesity and severe obesity.

Bariatric surgery is a recognised and accepted approach for both weight loss and treatment of many of the conditions related to obesity. However, not everyone qualifies for bariatric surgery. There are certain requirements people must meet in order to be a candidate for bariatric surgery.



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## Patient Journey

### Consultation

During your consultation with you will discuss your options and which operation will be most appropriate for you. You will also discuss any medication you are currently on (bring a list) as you may need to stop taking some, such as aspirin, before surgery.

**Telehealth or zoom consultations are available if needed.**

### Preparation for Weight Loss Surgery

If you decide to proceed with surgery it's important to understand what to expect before during and after the operation. This all contributes to a faster, smoother recovery.

You will be provided with a comprehensive pre-operation guide. Your preparation for weight loss surgery will include:

- Undergoing physical assessments to make sure you are ready for surgery. This might include blood tests, X rays, cardiac function and lung function tests.
- Adhering to a very low calorie diet (VLCD) for at least two weeks prior to the operation.
- Cutting out or significantly reducing your smoking, if you smoke, to reduce surgery risks and improve recovery.
- No eating or drinking after midnight the day before your surgery.
- Ensuring you have support at home to care for you (cooking, laundry, caring for children etc) for five to seven days after coming home.
- Reporting any pre-surgery infections to your surgeon as you may need to delay surgery while your infection is treated.

## Surgery

### First few days after surgery

Most patients require a hospital stay of one to three days following weight loss surgery. You should plan to rest for at least a week after surgery to aid your recovery. You will not be able to drive for at least one week after surgery.

After surgery, you must follow a strict liquid diet, starting with clear liquids and slowly introducing protein shakes and pureed foods.



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## First 6-8 weeks after surgery

Most people return to work within 3-4 weeks of surgery. You should continue to follow the liquid diet of pureed foods and shakes and slowly introduce soft foods under the supervision of one of our dietitians.

Exercise also plays a key part in post-surgery recovery. Physical activity is an important element of any healthy lifestyle. To begin, gentle movement such as walking and swimming is recommended. Again this can be done under the supervision of one of our exercise physiologists.

You will be able to introduce solid food within six to eight weeks, under the supervision of a dietitian. Your dietitian will also help you to plan the timing and frequency of meals and ensure you are meeting your nutritional needs and help you achieve your weight loss goals in a healthy and sustainable way.

After eight weeks of recovery, you can start to introduce more intense physical activity, such as strength training.

## 6 months after surgery

Your life should be getting back to normal by now. To maintain a healthy lifestyle and achieve your weight loss goals, you should be following a nutrition plan developed in consultation with a dietitian and you should practice regular physical activity in consultation with an exercise physiologist.

A great benefit of weight loss surgery is that you will feel less physical discomfort exercising as your weight decreases. Many patients discover a new-found enthusiasm for exercise and sports.

## Is weight loss surgery the answer for you?

Obesity is a complex health disease. There's no denying that Australia is facing an obesity epidemic, but the factors that contribute to weight gain are many and varied. Long work hours, increased access to fast foods, and sedentary lifestyles all contribute, as do genetic factors.

The challenge of losing weight can be very difficult for many people. Northern Bariatrics knows that many patients try their best with making dietary, exercise and lifestyle changes, only to find they can't achieve the desired results. Bariatric (weight loss) surgery is a proven and effective treatment pathway for many patients to lose weight and overcome obesity-related health complications.