

Gastric (roux en y) bypass and weight loss – is this the correct choice for me?

Guidelines for patients

Introduction

Losing weight is a balance between eating a healthy balanced diet and improving your lifestyle to be more active. Sometimes weight loss and managing to maintain the weight lost is difficult to achieve.

A gastric bypass operation may be suitable for those individuals who have tried unsuccessfully to lose weight in the past. In the long term, it still requires a change in lifestyle, eating a balanced diet and being more active. However a gastric bypass will help by restricting the amount you can eat and causing a small degree of malabsorption of food as it travels through the bypassed intestine. Weight loss can be rapid in the first few months after surgery. Overall it is hoped that you will lose 50 – 60% of your excess body weight.

If you are considering this type of procedure you must be sure you understand what it means to your body and future lifestyle. It does not remove the need to be cautious with your diet. You will have to follow dietary rules and take a multivitamin and mineral supplement for the rest of your life. The operation itself has risks and you need to research this option thoroughly before undertaking such a significant step to achieve weight loss.

It is not impossible that after 2 years post surgery you will regain some of the weight lost. Therefore you need to make sure that you can follow the dietary changes asked of you after surgery.

Who can be considered for a gastric by-pass?

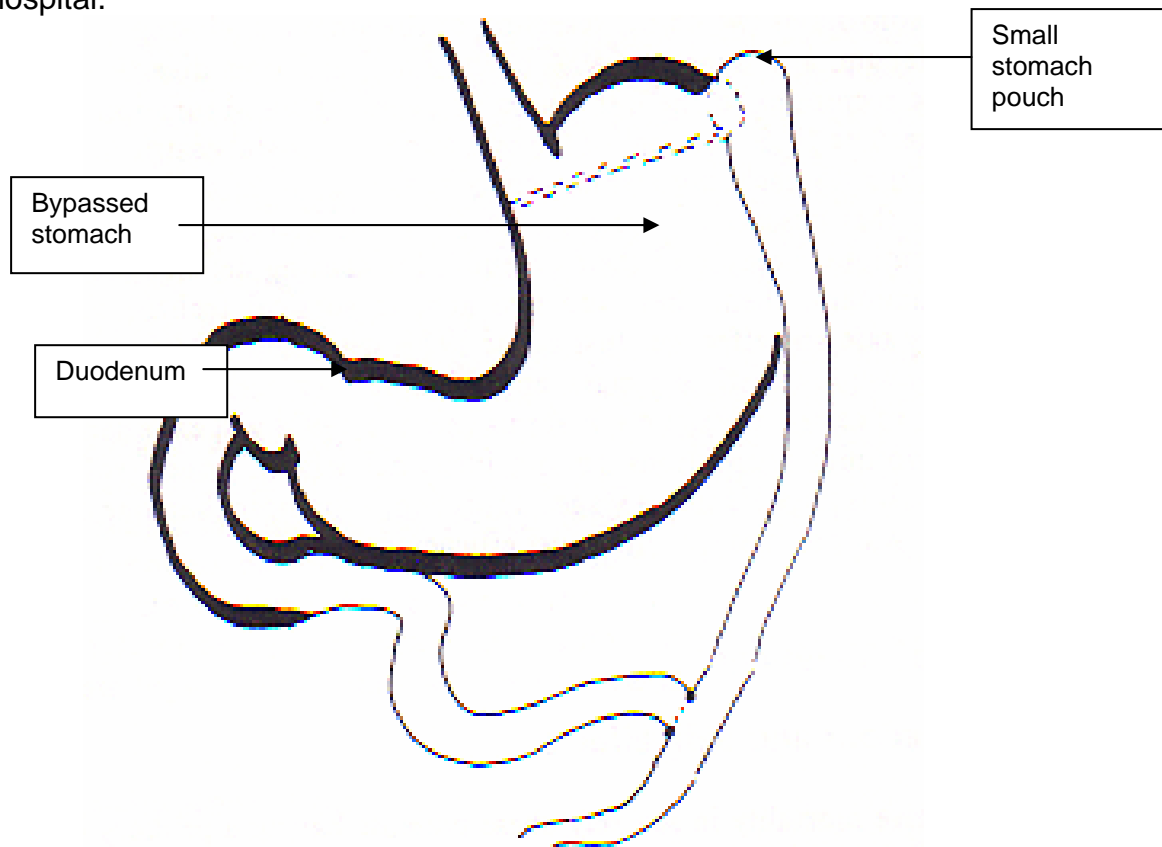
There are guidelines set by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). These state that to be considered for a gastric by-pass, you must meet the following:

- Have tried to lose weight by dieting in the past and have tried medication to assist weight loss, if appropriate
- Have a Body Mass Index equal or greater than 40 kg/m² or Body Mass Index equal or greater than 35 kg/m² with health problems related to your weight e.g. diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnoea. (Your Body Mass Index is a ratio of your weight against your height i.e. weight kg/height (m²). Many doctors' surgeries have charts that will calculate this for you.)
- Be ready to change your diet and become more active
- Be prepared to return to the centre where you have the surgery for follow-up.

What is a gastric bypass?

The diagram below shows the gastric bypass. A small pouch is formed which can range from 15 – 30 ml in volume. The two limbs of the by-pass can vary in length, with surgeons preferring their own technique. Lengths are generally between 0.75 M and 2 M. Usually the heavier patients have longer limb lengths.

The operation may be done openly or laparoscopically. Generally, those having the laparoscopic procedure will have a shorter length of stay in hospital.



The small stomach pouch means that you will not be able to eat as much at first. Your food will bypass part of your stomach and part of your small intestines. As a result, you may not absorb as much of the food that you eat. For this reason, multivitamins and mineral supplements after surgery are essential.

The initial dietary advice will vary depending on which surgeon carried out the surgery. Some surgeons prefer their patients to remain on nutritious liquids for several weeks after surgery. Other surgeons prefer patients to begin a pureed diet. The hole from the stomach into the intestines is very small so food has to be chewed well so that it can pass through. At first it is better to puree or blend the diet so that there are no lumps. Gradually more normal textured foods are introduced. Many people find that roast meat is difficult to eat but that casseroles or stews are easier. Other people find difficulty with bread but toast or crackers are easier.

Unfortunately most people find that snacks such as crisps are very easy to eat and therefore, you have to show some self control over food choice to maximise your weight loss!

Some people experience a condition called dumping syndrome if they eat sweet sugary foods or drink sweet sugary liquids. They may feel light-headed, nauseous and experience diarrhoea. It is very unpleasant and helps many people avoid these foods.

Following surgery, you will need to see a dietitian for advice about your diet. It is important that you have a balanced diet. The dietitian will also be able to advise you on how to prevent weight gain once the weight has been lost.

Some important changes are:

- Eating small regular meals with snacks in between meals if necessary
- Eating food slowly and taking care not to rush either food or drink.
- In the first year taking food in altered textures and taking time to find out what foods your bypass can tolerate or not.
- Taking a multi-vitamin and mineral supplement daily for the rest of your life.
- Avoiding high concentrations of sugar to prevent dumping syndrome.

Questions to consider if you are thinking of surgery

- Are you ready to make changes in your lifestyle? Weight can be regained in the long term.
- If you eat for comfort or because you are bored, what will you do instead?
- Are you prepared to return to the place where you had surgery for follow-up?
- What support does the place where you have the surgery offer? Is there a dietitian? Can you ring if you run into difficulties? How quickly can you be seen if there is a problem?
- How will you cope with the changes to your body shape and the loose skin that may result after weight loss?

There are two websites that you may wish to visit:

www.bospa.org

www.WLSinfo.co.uk

www.nice.org.uk/CG43

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