

# Gastric band and weight loss – is this the correct choice for me?

## Guidelines for patients

### Introduction

To lose weight and keep it off, a change in your lifestyle may be needed. You will need to eat a healthy balanced diet and be more active. Many people find this difficult to keep up in the long term and so often regain all the weight that they have lost and more besides.

The gastric band may help you to lose weight and keep it off by reducing the amount you can eat in one sitting and by helping you to feel full for longer. The gastric band is not however a quick answer to losing weight. When the band is sufficiently adjusted the expected rate of weight loss is around 1-2lbs (0.5-1.0kg)/ week. This may not sound much but is the same as losing between 3 stone 10 lbs to 7stone 6lbs per year.

If you are considering the gastric band, you still need to make changes to your lifestyle, eating a healthy balanced diet and being more active. You will have to work with the band to get the best results. Not everyone who has a band placed loses weight!

### Who can be considered for a gastric band?

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

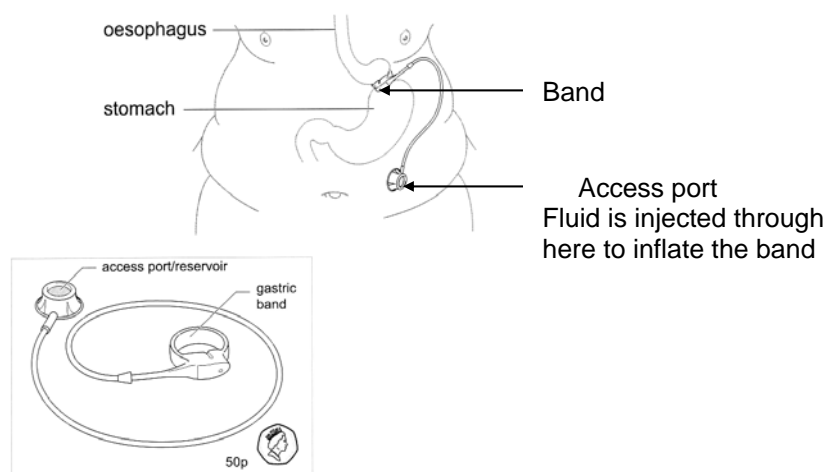
- Have tried to lose weight by dieting in the past and have tried medication to assist weight loss, if appropriate
- Not have any health problems that make you unsuitable for surgery
- Have a Body Mass Index (BMI) equal or greater than 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (Your BMI is a ratio of your weight against your height i.e. weight kg/height (m<sup>2</sup>). Many doctors' surgeries have charts that will calculate this for you.)  
or
- Have a BMI equal or greater or than 35 kg/m<sup>2</sup> with health problems related to your weight, for example type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or back/joint pain
- Be ready to change your diet and become more active

You must be willing to return to the centre where you have the surgery for long-term follow-up.

## **What is a gastric band?**

The gastric band consists of an inflatable band with a tube, which connects the band to an injection (access) port. Under surgery, the band is placed around the upper part of your stomach and the port (a small button-like reservoir) placed under your skin usually on the breastbone. This is connected to your band by a very small tube (see picture).

Placement of a gastric band



## **How does the gastric band work?**

At the time of surgery, the band is not usually inflated. (Some types of bands may need a small amount of fluid to be placed at the time of surgery.)

After approximately six to eight weeks you will return to have your band inflated. (The best results are seen when the band has time to settle in to place.) The band is inflated by putting a fine needle through the skin and into the special reservoir. Fluid is injected into the reservoir and into the band. This causes the band to inflate making it tighter. This creates a small stomach pouch so that when you eat you will feel full more quickly. You also will feel full for longer as the food will stay in your stomach pouch for longer.

You may have to return for several band inflations before you get the correct amount for you. Once at a suitable level, you should be able to eat smaller portions of a healthy balanced diet, should feel full for longer and lose weight at a rate of about 1-2lbs (0.5-1kg)/ week. If too much fluid is put in and the band made too tight, you will not be able to eat a balanced diet.

## **What diet will you need to follow?**

When you have surgery, you will have to follow a liquid diet or small portions of a very soft diet for several weeks afterwards. Eating normal meals too soon after the band has been placed, may cause it to move out of its correct place. It is important that you see the time after the band insertion as a new beginning and try to make lifestyle and dietary changes.

Some important changes include:

- Trying to have 3 regular meals, this will help you feel less hungry between meals and less tempted to snack.
- Sitting down at mealtimes, chewing food well and stopping as soon as you feel full (the full feeling is different for everyone- this is a learning process after surgery). These changes help to stop overeating and reduce the chance of food feeling like it is sticking in your throat
- Making healthy food choices. Unfortunately, chocolates, biscuits and crisps are amongst the foods that are easier to eat and can be easily eaten between meals or instead of meals. The result of this will be an unhealthy diet and weight gain.
- Choosing a diet low in fat and sugar this will help you achieve maximum weight loss. For example baked beans on toast contain fewer calories than a chocolate bar and a packet of crisps and may also have the advantage of making you feel full for longer.
- Keeping active. Walking to the corner shop rather than driving. Getting off the bus one stop earlier.

When the band has been inflated, you may find that you have to experiment with the texture of food that you eat at first. The aim is to work towards a balanced diet. You may struggle to eat the types of meals that you ate before. For instance, some people find bread difficult to eat but toast and crackers are easier. Many people find that casseroles, stews and minced meat are easier to eat than grilled or roast meat. So the sandwich lunch may need to be replaced with crackers and wafer thin meat or beans on toast, and the Sunday roast with a meat casserole.

At the treatment centre where you have your surgery, you should see a dietitian who will advise you.

### **Questions to consider if you are thinking of having a gastric band?**

- Are you ready to make changes in your lifestyle? The gastric band may help you to lose weight but only if you alter your diet and lifestyle.
- If you eat for comfort or boredom, what will you do instead?
- Are you prepared to return to the place where you had surgery for band refills and 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?

There are websites that you may wish to visit:

[www.bospa.org](http://www.bospa.org)

[www.WLSinfo.co.uk](http://www.WLSinfo.co.uk)

[www.nice.org.uk/CG43](http://www.nice.org.uk/CG43)

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