

25 Tips for Success After Weight Loss Surgery



25 tips for success

What to do and what not to do after a weight loss surgery operation

You will be making many changes to your lifestyle after you have weight loss surgery, which will include following your surgeon's instructions to the letter. Check out these 25 tips for success after gastric bypass surgery:

1. Know when to call your surgeon

In the weeks after surgery, you should call your surgeon if:

- You develop a temperature
- You have uncontrollable pain
- You cannot keep fluids down
- You are short of breath or have difficulty breathing
- You notice dark or tarry (bloody) stools
- You suddenly begin to bruise easily
- Your incisions begin to leak pus or bleed heavily
- You develop unexplainable severe leg pain

2. Don't drink calories

Your caloric intake will be very limited after surgery, which should help you lose weight. Don't work against your surgery by taking in liquid calories that provide no nutrition and slow your weight loss. Make every calorie count by focusing on protein, fruits and vegetables.

3. Avoid sugar

Sugar is the ultimate empty calorie. Sugar will make your blood sugar climb, cause hunger pangs, provide no nutrients and, for patients of certain types of gastric bypass, cause dumping syndrome. Avoid sugar and any foods that list sugar in the first three ingredients, whenever possible.

4 Avoid carbonated drinks

The bubbly nature of carbonated drinks, such as coke, can cause gas pain and increase the pressure in your stomach, which can be harmful to staples and sutures, especially in the months immediately after your surgery.

5 Don't drink fluids immediately before, during or after your meal

It is essential that you reserve the small amount of space you have in your stomach for high-quality, nutrient-rich food. Drinking before and during your meal will fill your stomach with fluid, instead of food, and drinking immediately after your surgery can "wash" food out of your stomach, making you feel hungry sooner. Separate food and fluid by at least a half an hour, whenever you can.

6 Keep your follow-up visits

After surgery, your progress will be closely monitored. Skipping appointments may mean that a nutritional deficiency, surgical complication or other issues may not be discovered in a timely manner. Also, appointments are a good motivator for staying on track with your goals.

7 Don't stop taking any medications without your surgeon's approval

Many diseases can improve with surgery and weight loss, but that doesn't mean you should stop taking your medication. Talk to your physician prior to stopping any medications.

8 Don't snack

Snacking is a habit that can slow your progress and hurt your long term success. Stick to high quality meals and avoid junk foods. If you are hungry, have a meal, but don't snack between meals.

9 Protein, Protein, Protein!

Protein should be your primary focus when sitting down for a meal. Not only will it help you maintain your muscle mass while losing fat, but it will also help you feel full longer after your meals.

10 Skip alcoholic drinks

Alcohol is full of empty calories that provide no nutritional value. It can also contribute to stomach ulcers, which you are already at risk for because of your surgery. Weight loss surgery also makes you more sensitive to alcohol than you were before, so a little goes a long way.

11 Chew and then chew some more

Chewing your food thoroughly is essential to preventing nausea and vomiting during and after your meal. Large chunks of food can have trouble passing through the digestive tract after surgery, and if it gets stuck along the way, it can cause pain.

12 Avoid pregnancy for the first 24 months after surgery

Your body will be in high weight-loss mode for at least a year after your surgery. During that time, supporting you and a baby would be unhealthy for you and disastrous for a developing fetus. If you are sexually active, use a reliable method of birth control, and consult your surgeon before attempting to become pregnant.

13 Attend a support group

There are more than 140,000 people having weight-loss surgery each year, so people who have walked in your shoes are not hard to find. Not only do support groups offer emotional support, but they can also provide advice on the wide range of changes you are facing as you lose weight.

14 Don't take over-the-counter drugs without your surgeon's approval

Over-the-counter drugs can pose risks after surgery that were not a concern prior to surgery. Pain relievers like ibuprofen and acetaminophen increase the likelihood that you will develop an ulcer. Remedies for constipation shouldn't be taken without physician approval, as constipation can be a sign of complications or a need for a change in diet.

15 Listen to your body

Don't eat if you aren't hungry. Just because the clock says it is time for a meal, doesn't mean you should eat one. Learn to listen to your smaller stomach and only eat when your body wants you to.

16 Avoid simple carbs

Simple carbohydrates are highly processed foods such as white bread, pasta, sugar and white rice. The rule of thumb is this if it is white, it may be a simple carb. You are better off with more wholesome alternatives such as brown rice that contain fiber and nutrients that white rice does not. Simple carbohydrates can also elevate blood glucose levels, triggering hunger pangs and cravings.

17. Exercise

From the moment you are able to after surgery, exercise. Even if you can't walk far or for very long, get started. Your results will be better, and you will be encouraged by how quickly your stamina improves as the pounds shed. Walking also helps prevent serious complications, such as pulmonary embolus and blood clots, if you start immediately after surgery.

18. Eat mindfully

No more eating while watching television. Focus on what you are doing when you eat, and stop the moment you feel full. Giving food your full attention will help you learn to say when and develop new healthier habits.

19. Stay hydrated. Drink lots of water

This will help you feel more energetic, and it will prevent you from mistaking hunger for thirst. Many adults confuse the two sensations, so if you are well-hydrated, you won't ever wonder if you are truly hungry.

20. Surgery won't fix your life

Remember that surgery is a way to lose weight, but it is not a miracle fix for every problem in your life. Being thin won't make your children clean their room, it won't fix a bad marriage and it certainly won't make your nosy relatives behave themselves. Be realistic in your expectations.

21. Say goodbye to caffeine

Caffeine is the most-used drug in the world, and it is a drug. Caffeine alters your mood, increases your heart rate and is a diuretic. If you drink caffeine, you will be working against your efforts to stay well-hydrated and increase your risk of a stomach ulcer.

22. Find healthful coping skills

If you need bariatric surgery, the chances are high that you used food as a coping mechanism for stress. It is time to find a new way to cope, whether it is exercise, reading a book, talking to a friend on the phone or whatever works for you other than eating.

23. Milk? Maybe

If you must drink calories, skim milk is an excellent option. Be aware, though, that many weight-loss surgery patients develop lactose intolerance after surgery, even if they didn't have it before. Go easy on the dairy products until you know how your body will tolerate lactose.

24. Kiddie meals and doggy bags

Restaurant portions are going to be massive in comparison to your needs after surgery. Plan on taking food home or ordering a child's portion. If you aren't sure you can resist joining the clean plate club, divide an acceptable portion away from the meal and have the server remove the rest before temptation sets in.

25. Stop using straws

If you are going to drink, don't use a straw. Straws not only allow you to drink too quickly, so you may end up with an uncomfortably full stomach, but they also allow air into the stomach that can cause serious discomfort.

