



## Bariatric Support Group

Weight loss surgery does not resolve existing emotional issues or heal the years of damage caused by morbid obesity. Surgery is performed to alleviate medical conditions associated with morbid obesity. Patients must learn to deal with their new self-image and address behavioral patterns that may lead to the return to pre-surgical habits. Follow-up and emotional support is crucial for long term success.

### Challenges after Bariatric Surgery

Clinical Challenges for Patient's Include:

- ❖ Continual physical transitions
- ❖ Re-evaluation of body image
- ❖ Learning to take responsibility for feelings and behaviors
- ❖ Learning to identify and express feelings without the coping mechanism of overeating
- ❖ Development of realistic expectations
- ❖ Recognition that surgery is a tool, and not a "magic bullet"
- ❖ Learning to cope with eating adjustments and dramatic changes in their bodies
- ❖ Learning that they need to work to keep the weight off after surgery

### Support Group Provides

1. A safe environment for patients to discuss and deal with:
  - ❖ Feelings of uncertainty, helplessness and lack of control
  - ❖ Treatment-related concerns
  - ❖ Self-image and body-image issues
  - ❖ Social issues relating to rapid weight loss
2. Helps with the challenges of: Behavior Modification
  - ❖ Altering chronic eating habits
  - ❖ Learning new eating behaviors
  - ❖ Identifying urge verse hunger
  - ❖ Identifying triggers to eating and alternatives to overeating
  - ❖ Developing non-food coping skills
3. Commitment to success by attendance:
  - ❖ Improved quality of life
  - ❖ Continued weight loss

### Preoperative Benefits

Preoperatively, a Support Group provides the bariatric patient with:

- ❖ Fellowship through a common bond
- ❖ A source of up-to-date information about surgery
- ❖ Education in nutrition, exercise, and preoperative needs, leading to improved outcomes
- ❖ A safe place to share experience
- ❖ An opportunity to begin work on behavior modification

## Postoperative Benefits

Postoperatively, a Support Group helps the bariatric patient to:

- ❖ Feel less isolated as a surgery patient
- ❖ Feel less isolated with potential weight loss failures
- ❖ Feel less anxious about the changes they face
- ❖ Learn about, and share each other's experiences at various stages in the process
- ❖ Establish realistic expectations
- ❖ Continue to learn and work on behavior modification

Who Should Attend?

- ❖ People interested in weight loss surgery
- ❖ Postoperative weight loss patients
- ❖ Family members, significant others, and/or friends of the bariatric patient
- ❖ Healthcare Professional involved in the care of the bariatric patient

Postoperative support is extremely important. Patients may experience dramatic weight loss, and may need special help in dealing with dietary adjustments and emotional needs. The support group provides a non-punitive, nonjudgmental, supportive environment to enable the bariatric patient to share feelings, concerns, discover educational resources and build a social network for support.

Angela Angus, RN

Bariatric Nurse Coordinator