Introduction

This information booklet has been developed to help prepare you for your Bariatric Surgery. It discusses what you can expect before, during and after your stay in hospital and helps you with the lifestyle changes you need to make after surgery.

Remember this is the beginning of a challenging journey and it is important that you are well prepared with information, and determination to reap the benefits.

Bariatric Surgery Support (BSS) is a unique initiative aimed at empowering people, through involvement and communication. It is the collective concept of Dr Andre Potgieter, Dr Etienne Swanepoel and their Patients. It is a holistic approach focused on the patient/doctor relationship.

The purpose of Bariatric Surgery Support is to provide a platform for people to network, share, motivate, encourage and support each other in their journey to transforming themselves in body, mind and spirit.

Bariatric Surgery Support (BSS) is a Cape Town based Support Group for people seeking information and Support about Weight-Loss Surgery. We deal with a host of pre and post operation issues aimed at facilitating your journey to a healthier lifestyle.

Procedures

Bariatric surgery (weight-loss surgery) includes a variety of procedures performed on people who are obese. Weight loss is achieved by reducing the size of the stomach with an implanted medical device (gastric banding) or through removal of a portion of the stomach (sleeve gastrectomy or biliopancreatic diversion with duodenal switch) or by re-secting and re-routing the small intestines to a small stomach pouch (gastric bypass surgery).

Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass is considered the Gold Standard operation for morbid obesity and accounts for approximately 70% of bariatric procedures worldwide. It is the operation that all other weight loss procedures are compared to. Roux-en-Y gastric bypass is a technically more challenging procedure than other surgical procedures available but has grown in popularity because it has been shown to produce sustainable long-term weight loss in most patients. Many problems associated with obesity such as diabetes and sleep apnea are improved or completely resolved. It has a low mortality rate (0.5-1%). Roux-en-Y gastric bypass offers a very good balance between weight loss and risk of Complications and is performed Laparoscopically (also called minimally invasive surgery) (MIS).
**PRE-SURGERY**

**Q: What does my weight need to be in order to qualify for surgery?**

A: Measure your height in metres (eg. 1.75 m) and measure your weight in kg (eg. 125 kg) Then divide your height squared (ie. \(1.75 \times 1.75 = 3.06\)) into your weight in kg. The answer in this example is 40. This is called your body mass index (BMI). If your BMI is 40 or above, you will qualify for surgery, provided there are no contra-indications (these can only be established during your consultation with the surgeon and thereafter with the other team members). If your BMI is at least 35 and you have other health problems eg. diabetes or heart disease, you will also qualify for surgery, provided there are no other contra-indications.

**Q: Will my medical aid pay for the procedure?**

A: There are a few medical aids who will pay for the procedure. In most cases they will pay a percentage. Here are some of the medical aids which pay for surgery, or which have, in our experience, paid for claims in the past:

- Medshield
- Discovery (Comprehensive and Executive)
- Momentum
- Massmart Closed to Public
- Metropolitan
- Parmed

It is possible to change your medical aid to one of those that pays (if it is an open medical aid). Make enquiries at the particular medical aid you are interested in. Check on their website whether a medical aid is open to anyone or whether it is for the exclusive use of a group of employees (closed).

Please check with your Medical Aid how much of the procedure they cover and how much will be for your account.

**Q: What is the approximate cost of surgery?**

A: You will only know this after an appointment with one of our surgeons, but a ball park figure is R60,000 to R130,000 upwards, depending on the procedure that is best suited for your individual case.

**Q: What if I cannot afford bariatric surgery, but my quality of life is affected by my weight?**

A: There are no state hospitals who offer bariatric surgery. There are health insurance companies who will help finance bariatric surgery. If you need their details, contact our support group via e-mail. Bariatric surgery is expensive and will unfortunately only be an option for a small group of people, if you are not on a medical aid which covers this surgery.
Q: What is my first step if I am interested in having bariatric surgery?

A: Visit our website www.bariatricsurgerysupport.co.za — Choose a surgeon. Set up an appointment. This will be an information session as well as an evaluation session by the surgeon. After this, he will refer you to the team physician, psychiatrist and dietician for evaluation before surgery will be approved. You will also need to have some tests done. All of this will be explained during your appointment with the surgeon.

Q: Do I have to live in the Cape Town area in order to have my surgery done by one of the surgeons listed on your website?

A: No, this is not necessary. Our patients come from all over South Africa, Africa and from overseas. You will spend a maximum of 2 weeks in Cape Town for consultation and recovery.

Q: Do your surgeons do both gastric bypass surgery as well as gastric banding?

A: Yes, but gastric bypass surgery is more popular because in spite of the fact that this is a bigger operation, it undoubtedly gives better results than banding.

Q: What kind of changes do I need in my diet?

A: July Kotze is our resident dietician and is part of the team that will assess you. She will consult with you before and after the surgery to ensure that the necessary dietary changes are made to accommodate your lifestyle change.

Q: Will I need to take vitamins after surgery?

A: Yes, you will need to take vitamins for the rest of your life. Immediately after surgery you will begin taking a chewable multi-vitamin daily, as well as vitamin B-12 and calcium citrate.

Q: What kind of psychological assessment do I need?

A: Routine Assessment will be done as part of your consultation.
Q: If I am unable to travel, are there surgeons in other parts of the country who perform this surgery?

A: Yes, here is a list of the hospitals around the country which have Bariatric Centres:

N1 City Hospital (Netcare), Cape Town
(Dr. JA Potgieter and Dr. E Swanepoel)
Durbanville (Medi-Clinic), Cape Town
(Dr. E. Swanepoel and Dr. JA Potgieter)
Kingsbury (Life), Cape Town
Waterfall (Netcare), Johannesburg
Clinton (Netcare), Alberton
Boksburg/Benoni (Netcare)
Rosepark (Life), Bloemfontein
St. Augustine’s (Netcare), Durban
St. Anne’s (Netcare), Pietermaritzburg – only gastric banding
George (Medi-Clinic)
Green Acres (Netcare), Port Elizabeth

Q: Will I have to change my medications? Will I be able to stop certain medications?

A: Many medications (for blood pressure, diabetes, etc.) may be stopped at some point after gastric bypass. For medications that need to be continued, most can be swallowed, absorbed and work the same as before gastric bypass. Usually no change in dose is required.

Q: Can I become pregnant after surgery?

A: Yes. Bariatric surgery often increases fertility in those who have had difficulty conceiving in the past. However, pregnancy must be avoided for 18-24 months post operatively, until your weight has stabilized.
THE SURGERY

Q: What happens before surgery?

A: Your surgeon will give you specific instructions on how to prepare for the procedure. Your stomach must be completely empty to reduce the changes of vomiting during the procedure. It is important that you abstain from food and liquid after midnight the evening before your surgery.

Q: What happens on the day of surgery?

A: You will report to a pre-operative nursing unit, where you will change into a hospital gown. A nurse will review your chart and confirm that all paperwork is in order. You will be taken to a pre-operative nursing unit where an anesthesiologist will start an IV. Before any medications are administered, your surgeon will verify your name and the type of procedure you are having. You will then be taken to the operating room. After the appropriate form of anesthesia is administered, surgery will be performed.

Q: What type of anaesthesia will be used?

A: You will have a pre-operative interview with an anesthesiologist who will ask you questions regarding your medical history. Gastric bypass surgery is performed under general anesthesia, which will keep you asleep during your surgery.

Q: What happens during the surgery, and how is it performed?

A: Your surgeon will make five to seven small incisions, and insert tube-like instruments through them. The abdomen will be filled with gas to help the surgeon view the abdominal cavity. A camera will be inserted through one of the tubes that will display images on a monitor in the operating room. In this manner, your surgeon will be able to work inside your abdomen without making a larger incision.

During the Roux-en-Y procedure, the stomach is divided and separated. A small pouch is created at the top of the stomach and the rest is permanently separated. The small intestine is then attached to the new pouch creating a new digestive tract.

Q: What happens after the surgery?

A: Once the surgery is completed, you will be taken to a post-operative or recovery unit where a nurse will monitor your progress. It is important that your bandages be kept clean and dry. You will be asked to walk the night of surgery. You will undergo a swallow study on the first postoperative day to make sure there are no problems. If there are no problems, you will be discharged on postoperative day two. You will be scheduled for a follow-up appointment within two weeks after you are discharged from the hospital.

Q: How long will I be in the hospital?

A: Usually, patients are in the hospital for two to five days.
**POST-SURGERY**

### Q: Will there be scar(s)?

**A:** The incisions should heal well, leaving small discrete scars.

### Q: Will I need plastic Surgery?

**A:** Because weight loss is so fast after surgery, and the skin is often not elastic enough to rebound, it is common for bariatric patients to have excess skin removed later on by plastic surgery.

### Q: What are the risks associated with a Roux-en-Y procedure?

**A:** As with any surgery, there are risks such as bleeding, infection, or an adverse reaction to anesthesia. Other risks include anastigmatic leakage, deep venous thrombosis, pulmonary embolism, follow-up operations to correct complications, increased risk for gallstones and nutritional deficiencies such as anemia. Your surgeon will inform you of the risks prior to surgery.

### Q: What should I watch out for?

**A:** Be sure to call your doctor if any of the following symptoms appear:

- Fever
- Worsening pain
- Redness or swelling around the incision
- The incision is warm to the touch
- Drainage from the incision

### Q: When can I expect to return to work and/or resume normal activities?

**A:** Light activity at home is encouraged after surgery. You can expect to return to normal daily activities, such as showering, and walking up stairs within a few days. If you are taking narcotic medications for pain, you should not drive. You can be back at work as soon as you feel strong enough to go back—usually within one week after surgery.

### Q: What changes will I need to make to my lifestyle after surgery?

**A:** Some of the most important lifestyle changes to adapt to after weight loss surgery include:

- Slowly increasing physical activity
- Assessing and logging in daily food intake
- Undergoing counselling to adapt to the changing body image
- Eliminating social situations that promote overeating
- Tackling any emotional issues that triggered overeating with a therapist
- Making time to prepare special foods and meals to complement a healthier lifestyle

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**Medical Procedures**

**First Health Finance** offers financial assistance for plastic surgery, dental procedures, corrective eye surgery, hair restoration and other medical procedures. Recreate yourself in your own perfect image.

**First Health Finance**

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42 Hans Strijdom Avenue
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What is the Bariatric Surgery recovery process?

Most people typically stay in the hospital for a few days or less after gastric bypass surgery. Some may need to stay four to five days. Your doctor will approve your discharge home once the following is true for you:

- You can move without too much discomfort.
- You can eat liquid and/or pureed food without vomiting.

You no longer require pain medication given by injection. You will remain on liquid or pureed food for several weeks after the surgery. Even after that time, you will feel full very quickly, sometimes only being able to take a few bites of solid food. This is because the new stomach pouch initially only holds a tablespoonful of food. The pouch eventually expands. However, it will hold no more than about one cup of thoroughly chewed food (a normal stomach can hold up to two to 3 cups).

Upon follow up, your doctor will determine if you need replacement of iron, calcium, vitamin B12, or other nutrients. Supplements, such as a multivitamin with minerals, will be prescribed to provide any nutrients that you may not be getting from your diet. A lack of nutrients can occur because you are eating less and because the food moves through your digestive system more quickly.

Other recommendations you should follow:

- Once you are eating solid food, remember to chew each bite very slowly and thoroughly.
- Eat small meals frequently throughout the day, rather than large meals that your stomach cannot accommodate. Your new stomach probably won’t be able to handle both solid food and fluids at the same time. So, you should separate fluid and food intake by at least 30 minutes and only sip what you are drinking.
- Avoid high fat, high sugar foods and alcohol.
- Resume physical activity six weeks after the operation. Once you are fully recovered, you should strive for daily physical activity in order to maintain weight loss after the surgery.

Seek social support from others who have undergone weight loss surgery.

The weight loss results of gastric bypass surgery are generally good. Most patients lose an average of 4-5 kg per month and reach a stable weight between 18 and 24 months after surgery. Often, the greatest rate of weight loss occurs in the very beginning (that is, just following the surgery when you are still on a liquid diet).
Meet The Team These are the Professionals that will support you during your Life Changing journey:

Dr. JA Potgieter - Specialist Surgeon
MB.ChB (Stell); M Med (Chir); FCS (SA)
J A Potgieter & Associates Inc.
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Dr Etienne Swanepoel - Bariatric Surgeon
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