

## Follow-up

### *After weight loss surgery*

*This section of the Guide to Your Weight Loss Surgery explains clinic visits and medical and other concerns in the weeks after surgery.*

## Help Your Body Heal

Follow these instructions carefully to help your body heal:

- Do **not** lift more than 10 to 15 pounds (no more than a gallon of milk in each hand) for 1 month after surgery. When you pick things up, bend at your knees, not at your waist. Slowly increase how much you lift, but do not lift anything that causes pain or discomfort.
- Do **not** do heavy housework for 1 month after surgery.
- Do **not** drive while you are on prescription pain medicines that contain *opioids*, a certain type of drug.
- Resume sex when it is comfortable.
- You may shower every day. Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or swim until your incisions are healed. This will take about 4 weeks.

## Clinic Visits

You will need to follow up with your surgical team at the clinic on a regular basis after surgery. At your follow-up visits:

- We will check your weight and blood pressure.
- You will see your nurse, nurse practitioner, dietitian, and doctor. Each one will check how you are doing, based on the care they provide, and will give their recommendations.
- These visits are a good time to ask questions and discuss your concerns.
- A plan for the next visit will be made.
- If needed, more visits or tests may be added to make sure that you are making progress toward your goals.



*You will need to follow up with your surgical team at the clinic on a regular basis after surgery.*

It is very important for you to come to all of these appointments so that we can help you with any problems and concerns you are having. This will also help prevent new problems from developing. If you are having major problems, we may want to see you more often.

### **For Gastric Bypass and Sleeve Gastrectomy Patients**

Follow-up visits, with a blood test at most visits, are usually scheduled at:

- 2 weeks
- 6 weeks (no blood test at this visit)
- 3 months
- 6 months
- 9 months
- 1 year
- Once a year after the first year

### **For Gastric Band Patients**

Follow-up visits, with a blood test at 3 months, 12 months, and then yearly, are usually scheduled at:

- 2 weeks
- 6 weeks
- Every month for the first 6 months
- Every 1 to 2 months for the second 6 months
- 2 to 4 times a year after the first year

### **Blood Tests**

Blood draws for your follow-up clinic visits may be done by your primary doctor or in our hospital lab.

- If your primary doctor does the blood tests, the test results must be sent to our clinic 1 week before your appointment. Please ask your doctor to fax your results to 206-598-6705.
- If you have the blood tests done at our hospital lab, **you must arrive at the lab 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment time** so that the results are ready in time for your appointment.

### **For Gastric Bypass Patients**

You must have blood tests done before each visit so that we can check your nutritional status.

## **For Gastric Band Patients**

You will have blood tests done at 3 months, 12 months, and then once a year after your surgery.

## **Wound Care**

- If you had **open surgery**, you will have 1 incision that goes straight down the middle of your belly. This incision will be held together with deep stitches, and your skin will be closed with surgical staples. The staples will be removed at your first clinic visit after surgery. The stitches will dissolve over time.
- If you had **laparoscopic surgery**, you will have 4 to 5 small incisions. These will be closed with stitches and Steri-Strips (thin strips of tape).

You may take a shower while your staples or Steri-Strips are in place. Make sure that you:

- Simply let the soap and water wash over the incision(s).
- Do **not** scrub the incision(s).
- Pat the incision(s) dry with a clean towel.
- Do **not** put any creams or ointments on the incision(s).

Some oozing of pink fluid is common. If you notice any oozing that is bloody or different from the pink fluid:

- Wash your hands well.
- Gently clean the area.
- Tape a dry, sterile gauze pad over the site.
- Do this 2 times a day until the oozing stops.

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

Call any member of your Bariatric Surgery Team if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
  - Redness
  - Increasing pain
  - Swelling
  - Foul-smelling drainage or a change in the type or amount of drainage

- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

## **Other Things to Know**

### **Taking Medicines**

Right after weight loss surgery, it may be hard for some pills, tablets, or capsules to pass through your new stomach pouch. You may have to crush the medicine or take it in a liquid form for the first 2 to 4 weeks after surgery. After that, most patients can handle a pill the size of an aspirin or smaller, one pill at a time.

If you have any questions about your medicines, ask your pharmacist. Or, check with any member of your Bariatric Surgery Team.

### **Emotional Changes**

After surgery, you may feel more emotional than usual. This is normal and usually goes away after a week or so.

If you are upset, or just need someone to talk to, please call your primary care provider, or any member of your Bariatric Surgery Team. They will help you get in touch with the best person to help you.

### **Vomiting**

Vomiting may be caused by eating too fast or too much, or from drinking fluids with meals. If you vomit, think about what may have caused it. If you cannot find a reason, call any member of your Bariatric Surgery Team. Keep a food diary to help us find the reason for your vomiting.

### **Bowel Care**

Constipation is common after weight loss surgery, especially while you are taking opioid pain medicine. It is important not to become constipated. You may need to take a stool softener for 1 month after surgery.

These tips may help you have a bowel movement:

- Eat applesauce, oatmeal, or pureed prunes daily.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Exercise often.

If you still do not have a bowel movement, try a suppository such as Dulcolax, a Fleets enema, or milk of magnesia. If these options do not work after 2 tries, call your health care provider.

## Prevent Pregnancy

Many women who have been obese and unable to become pregnant find that they can get pregnant during the weight-loss phase. We strongly advise that you **NOT** get pregnant for at least 18 months after your surgery. It is very important that you use an **effective birth control method** during this time.

These are 2 main reasons to avoid getting pregnant during this time:

- This is when you will lose the most weight, and your body will need to adjust to the changes.
- Many women do not have enough folic acid, vitamin B12, and iron in their bodies after surgery. These *deficiencies* (shortages) can cause permanent or fatal birth defects in a developing fetus.

## Medical Alert Jewelry

You may want to wear medical alert jewelry after you have had weight loss surgery. This is very important if you cannot digest pills, tablets, or capsules, or if you have any of these conditions:

- Asthma
- Autism
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Food allergies
- Heart disease
- Hemophilia
- Hypertension
- Latex allergies
- Parkinson's disease

One company that sells medical alert jewelry is Medic Alert. To learn more, please visit their website at [www.medicalert.org](http://www.medicalert.org), or call 888-633-4298.

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Center for Bariatric  
Surgery: 206-598-2274