



# Weight Loss Surgery Guide

Mercy 

*Your life is our life's work.*



## WHAT TO EXPECT

The path to a successful surgery involves many steps, and Mercy's here to support you along the way.

Knowing what to expect at each step makes your journey smoother and brings you closer to your new life after weight loss.

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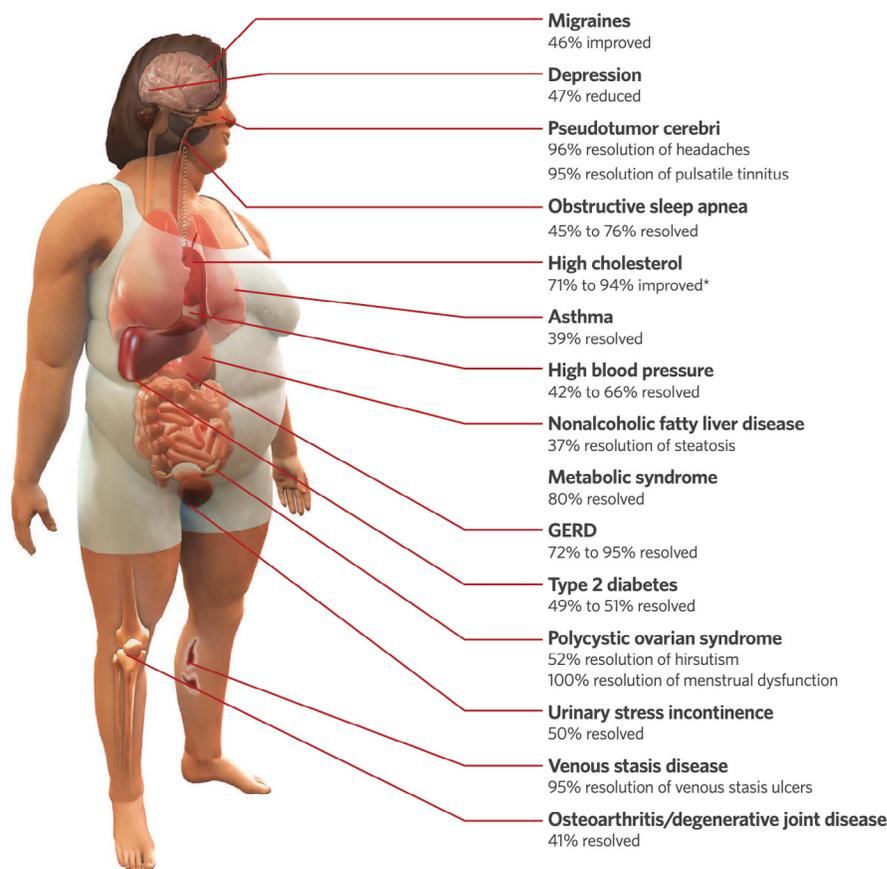
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## A NEW YOU

Once you and your doctor decide you're a candidate for weight loss surgery, this guide prepares you for what's next on your journey.

As you complete each step, you'll be closer to a whole new you and a chance to lead a fuller, more active life.

### Common Health Improvements



Resolution observed in the context of studies. Ethicon Endosurgery has no independent data to suggest permanent resolution.

\*Figure is for hyperlipidemia - a general term for high fats in the blood, which may include cholesterol and/or triglycerides.

.....  
 Getting Started:  
 Real Experiences



BEFORE



AFTER

“ I look forward to the things that enter my life, like *improved health* and a *fresh outlook on life*. ”

Jennifer Harmon  
 Mercy Co-worker & Bariatric  
 Surgery Recipient

## REAL EXPERIENCES

With honesty and humor, Mercy co-worker Jennifer Harmon shares useful information about **preparing for bariatric surgery** and life after surgery on our patient experience blog.

[mercy.net/NoYoYo](https://mercy.net/NoYoYo)

## WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY VS. MEDICATIONS

Weight loss medications have exploded in popularity across the U.S.

These drugs mimic natural hormones that regulate appetite and feelings of fullness, resulting in weight loss.

But how do they compare with bariatric surgery for long-term obesity treatment?

GASTRIC SLEEVE SURGERY	WEIGHT LOSS MEDICATION
One procedure	Taken daily or weekly; can be lifelong
Food plans and exercise help regulate side effects	Most people have gastrointestinal side effects
65% of excess weight loss by a year after surgery	15% of total body weight loss over 68 weeks with lifestyle changes
50% of excess weight loss is maintained for 5 years	67% of weight loss is regained within one year of stopping medication
30-50% lower premature death risk from obesity (all bariatric procedures)	58% of people stop using medication before seeing lasting health benefits
One-time cost averages \$11,000 - \$16,000 at Mercy	Average monthly cost is over \$1,000
Many health plans cover bariatric surgery	About 25% of health plans don't cover medication for weight loss alone
Health plans recover surgery costs in 2-4 years	It would cost \$411 billion a year if half of Americans with obesity took medication

SOURCES: JAMA, ASMBS.org, Becker's Hospital Review, Wiley Study, NIH Study

Studies show weight loss surgery is the most effective and longest-lasting treatment for obesity. It leads to greater weight loss and helps prevent or improve conditions like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, sleep apnea and certain cancers.

From a cost perspective, you're likely to spend as much on weight loss medication in a year as you would on a gastric sleeve procedure. And bariatric surgery is much more likely to be covered by your health plan.

Mercy offers the full spectrum of weight management treatments; it's important to talk with your bariatric care team about what's right for you. Whether you choose medication or surgery, living a healthy lifestyle is essential to breaking the obesity cycle for good.

# 1

## Choose Your Bariatric Team

Mercy's multispecialty bariatric teams include surgeons, behavioral health specialists, dietitians, exercise specialists, nurse practitioners and other professionals who are ready to provide the care and support you need before, during and after surgery.

Visit [mercy.net/BariatricDocs](https://mercy.net/BariatricDocs) for a list of our doctors.

### Accreditation

A level of excellence that leads to better outcomes

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### Hospital Quality

Choose a hospital system with safe, high-quality care

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 Step 1:  
 Choose Your  
 Bariatric Team



## ACCREDITATION

Accreditation signifies a level of excellence that leads to better outcomes for weight loss surgery patients.

Some insurance carriers require that you have your surgery at an accredited center — but it’s beneficial even when it’s not required. At Mercy, our weight loss programs have achieved bariatric center accreditation through either of these organizations:

The Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery Accreditation & Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP)

A joint program by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and The American Society of Metabolic Surgeons (ASMBS).

The Surgical Review Corporation (SRC)

A nonprofit, patient safety organization that develops and administers best-in-class accreditation programs for medical professionals, surgeons, hospitals and freestanding outpatient facilities throughout the world.

To become accredited, hospitals undergo a rigorous reporting process and inspection, which includes confirmation that they have specialized equipment for weight loss patients. To maintain their standing, hospitals must perform a minimum number of weight loss procedures annually. Accredited centers also provide more staff training, including:

Obesity sensitivity  
 Moving obese patients  
 Recognizing complications of surgery

Post-op nutrition  
 Post-op care

Choosing Mercy means you’ll receive safe, high-quality care provided by an accredited bariatric team.

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 Step 1:  
 Choose Your  
 Bariatric Team



▶ Talk to a Bariatric  
 Coordinator

Mercy offers a free, 45-minute phone consult with one of our bariatric coordinators. Schedule a consult to find out if you qualify for surgery and how to get started.

[mercy.net/BariatricCall](https://mercy.net/BariatricCall)

## HOSPITAL QUALITY

Since severe obesity may involve other medical problems that need to be addressed along with your surgical care, it's important to consider hospital quality.

The Leapfrog Group, a national watchdog group of health care employers, gives **10 Mercy Hospitals a Hospital Safety Grade "A" rating** based on over 100 different measures of patient safety.

Several of our hospitals have also earned 100 Top Hospitals recognition from IBM Watson Health. Hospitals with this designation have better results on key clinical and operational performance indicators, including:

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Survival rates                    | Length of stay               |
| Patient complications             | Wait time in emergency rooms |
| Health-care-associated infections | Inpatient expenses           |
| 30-day mortality                  | Profitability                |
| 30-day readmission rates          | Ratings from patients        |

As you consider your weight loss surgery options, be sure to investigate the quality of the hospital system supporting the weight loss program.

# 2

## Understand the Surgeries

Weight loss surgery is a tool that helps you eat less and choose a healthy lifestyle, but it's important to understand how the surgeries work.

### **Restrictive Procedures**

Decrease or limit food intake

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### **Malabsorptive Procedures**

Bypass the small intestine

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### **Complications & Risks**

Weigh the benefits and risks

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### **Side Effects**

Food intolerances are possible

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### **Long-Term Outcomes**

Statistics show excellent, sustainable weight loss

.....  
 Step 2:  
 Understand  
 the Surgeries

## RESTRICTIVE PROCEDURES

Surgical approaches to treating severe obesity include restrictive and malabsorptive procedures.

Restrictive procedures decrease or limit food intake, with only small amounts of food needed to feel satisfied after a meal. Malabsorptive procedures cause incomplete absorption of food intake by bypassing a portion of the small intestine.

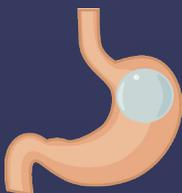
Restrictive procedures reduce the stomach size without changing the anatomy of the small intestine. Typically, restrictive surgery patients can only eat 1/2 to 1 cup of well-chewed food. This leads to an overall reduction in calorie intake. While restrictive operations lead to weight reduction, long-term studies show they're less effective than malabsorptive surgeries in sustaining weight loss. Lasting weight reduction always depends on your ability and motivation to adopt a long-term lifestyle of healthy eating and exercise.

Mercy performs two restrictive procedures:

▶ **Figure A**  
 Sleeve Gastrectomy



▶ **Figure B**  
 Intra-gastric Balloon



### Sleeve Gastrectomy

A small stomach pouch is created along the inner curve of the stomach, reducing the amount of food needed to feel satisfied and allowing you to feel satisfied longer after a meal. In this procedure, a thin, vertical sleeve of stomach is created, and the rest of the stomach is removed. The sleeve is about the size of a banana.

(See Figure A)

### Intra-gastric Balloon

In this non-surgical procedure, a deflated balloon is sent down the esophagus and placed in the stomach. Once in the stomach, the balloon is filled with a sterile saline solution until it's about the size of a grapefruit.

The balloon remains in the stomach for six months, where it takes up space to help reduce food intake. After six months, the balloon is deflated and removed.

(See Figure B)

.....  
 Step 2:  
 Understand  
 the Surgeries

## MALABSORPTIVE PROCEDURES

Malabsorptive procedures bypass a large amount of the small intestine, reducing the absorption of nutrients and calories.

Close monitoring, nutritional supplements, vitamins and lifelong medical surveillance are crucial to maintaining your health after these procedures.

As with restrictive procedures, lasting success depends on adopting a long-term lifestyle of healthy eating and exercise. Mercy performs two malabsorptive procedures:

▶ **Figure C**  
 Gastric Bypass



▶ **Figure D**  
 SADI



### Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass

This procedure changes the stomach's shape, its capacity to hold food and the time needed to empty the stomach of food. It re-routes the food as it leaves the new stomach. Gastric bypass combines gastric restriction with malabsorption. (See *Figure C*)

### Single Anastomosis Duodenal Switch (SADI)

The SADI procedure combines sleeve gastrectomy with gastric bypass to promote greater weight loss. After a tube-shaped pouch is created, the top part of the small intestine is separated from the stomach. The lower section is brought up and connected to the new stomach pouch. This shortens the small intestine by about half, decreasing calorie absorption. (See *Figure D*)

.....  
**Step 2:**  
**Understand**  
**the Surgeries**

► **Attend an Educational Seminar**

If you haven't already, be sure to attend a bariatric seminar. We offer both online and live sessions.

Visit [mercy.net/GetStarted](http://mercy.net/GetStarted) for more information.

## COMPLICATIONS & RISKS

When considering any type of surgery, it's essential to know the risks and benefits.

As part of your surgery preparation and education, review these potential complications. When choosing a surgery provider and hospital, it's important to check complication rates. Our surgeons are happy to discuss these with you.

### Ulcers

Erosions in the lining of the GI tract can develop and cause leakage. Tobacco use, overeating, using aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and cortisone use can cause ulcers.

### Pulmonary function

Complications may include blood clots, pneumonia, lung collapse, fluid in the chest or other breathing problems.

### Infection

Risks include wound, bladder and skin infections, pneumonia and deep-abdominal infections that can be life-threatening.

### Hernia

Cuts in the abdominal wall can lead to hernias after surgery. Twisting of the bowel can occur after gastric bypass.

### Bowel obstruction

Abdominal procedures can create scar tissue, increasing the risk for bowel obstruction.

### Specific gastric sleeve complications

Leakage, strictures, narrowing of the pouch, bleeding, esophageal dilation or reflux are possible risks.

### Specific SADI complications

Same risks as gastric bypass, plus a higher complication risk.

### Psychological issues

Anxiety and depression can occur while adjusting to a new lifestyle after weight loss surgery.

### Organ function

Risks include cardiovascular issues (heart attack, heart failure, irregular heartbeat or stroke) or problems with the liver or kidneys. Gallbladder removal may be needed during your surgery. Spleen injury or removal are also potential risks.

### Anesthesia reaction

All surgeries carry a risk of potential general anesthesia reactions, but they're more common in people with excess weight.

### Vomiting and dehydration

Report persistent vomiting to your care team, since it could signal a structural issue. Stay well hydrated to avoid dehydration.

### Narrowing (stricture) or stretching

The connection between the stomach and the small bowel can narrow or stretch. Dilation or re-operation may be needed.

### Bleeding

Internal bleeding or bleeding requiring blood transfusion may occur.

### Specific gastric bypass complications

Ulcers at the stomach or intestinal opening or in the non-functional, large-stomach pouch may occur.

### Vitamin and mineral deficiencies

Deficiencies in vitamin D, B12 and iron may develop and should be closely monitored after surgery.

## SIDE EFFECTS

Following gastric bypass, some patients experience intolerance to certain food types — usually sweets, dairy or fatty foods. This intolerance is called dumping syndrome.

Dumping syndrome can occur after gastric bypass or sleeve surgery. Dumping syndrome is characterized by unpleasant symptoms, including sweating, nausea and shaking that can last from a few minutes to a few hours.

We consider this an after effect, as it reinforces good dietary choices. Upon re-admittance to a hospital for any reason, please inform staff of your weight loss surgery. This ensures a proper diet during your hospitalization.

## LONG-TERM OUTCOME

More than 250,000 weight loss surgeries are performed in the U.S. each year. Statistics show excellent, sustainable weight loss and improved health from these procedures.

But surgery by itself doesn't guarantee long-term success. It's possible to defeat the surgery if you ignore program guidelines by drinking high-calorie liquids, snacking continually and avoiding physical activity.

Weight loss surgery is a tool that allows you to feel satisfied while eating less. It's up to you to use this tool to achieve your desired weight loss and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

# 3

## Verify Insurance & Financing

If you're having weight loss surgery, planning for the costs of your procedure and follow-up care is an important step. Talk with your treatment coordinator about how you're planning to finance these costs, which must be paid in full before surgery.

Payment options that may be available to you include medical insurance, private financing or self-pay.

### Important Note

This information is for education purposes only and is not intended to provide, nor be relied on for, specific financial or tax advice. Consult your own financial and tax advisors before engaging in any transaction.

References to specific commercial products, services, or companies does not constitute any endorsement by Mercy.

### Medical Insurance

Coverage varies among individual plans

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### Private Financing

Payment options to keep in mind

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### Self-Pay

Mercy's competitive self-pay pricing

.....  
Step 3:  
Verify Insurance  
& Financing

## MEDICAL INSURANCE

Some patients offset their bariatric surgery costs with help from their medical insurance plan. Your first step is contacting your plan to determine if weight loss surgery coverage is available.

If your employer offers several different plans, find out if any of them cover bariatric surgery. If coverage is available, some plans require medical documentation of your weight history, obesity medications you've taken and medically supervised weight management programs you've tried.

Many health plans cover bariatric surgery for people over age 18 with either of the following:

- [Body mass index \(BMI\) greater than 35](#)
- [BMI greater than 30 with a severe obesity-related condition](#)

Some Mercy Bariatric Centers participate in financing programs that help insured patients spread out their out-of-pocket surgical expenses over time. Program participants must meet eligibility criteria and have no outstanding balances with Mercy. Ask your treatment coordinator if you're eligible for this program, so you can make an informed decision.

.....  
**Step 3:**  
**Verify Insurance**  
**& Financing**

## PRIVATE FINANCING

You may need private financing to cover some or all of your surgical costs.

Consider these options for private financing:

### Family or Friends

Patients often find support from family members or friends who want to help them on their journey to better health.

### Life Insurance

Permanent life insurance policies often have a cash value component that can be borrowed against once your policy's value is large enough. Check with your insurance agent or policy underwriter to see if you qualify.

### Health Savings Account (HSA)

An HSA works like a personal savings account, but the pre-tax funds can only be used for health-related expenses, such as weight loss surgery. Funds roll over to the next year if you don't use the money. Check with your employer, health plan administrator, bank or other financial institution about opening an HSA.

### Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

An FSA is a pre-tax account you can use to pay for eligible medical, dental and vision expenses that aren't covered by your health plan. Check with your employer to see if they offer an FSA, to verify you can use the account for weight loss surgery and to explain documentation requirements.

### Retirement Loan Plans

While retirement savings should be reserved for your golden years, some people with obesity-related health problems consider this option. After comparing interest rates and long-term costs of other options (and potential lost retirement earnings), you may find it's the best option. Contact your employer or retirement plan to find out whether loans or hardship withdrawals are allowed. Ask about any penalties and consider the income tax implications of this option.

### Secured Medical Loan

This is a type of loan you secure from a bank or other financial institution with collateral. If you don't pay it back, the lender can take ownership of the collateral.

### CareCredit®

Mercy bariatric programs accept CareCredit, a health care credit card.

### Other Direct Lenders & Credit Cards

Unsecured loans allow you to borrow money without collateral, but the tradeoff is the interest rate. You must pay it back to the lender over time. Ask your financial institution if they have medical financing options available.

.....  
Step 3:  
Verify Insurance  
& Financing

► Discuss Your  
Financing  
Options

Your treatment coordinator may also be aware of other financing options. Be sure to contact them if you have questions.

## SELF-PAY

Self-pay means paying for your treatment yourself instead of using health insurance coverage or private financing.

Mercy offers competitive self-pay pricing to help people who choose this option. Check with your treatment coordinator to learn more.

# 4

## Prepare for Surgery

As you prepare for weight loss surgery, you'll undergo several individual assessments. Mercy offers tools to make the preparation process smooth for you.

### **Pre-surgery Documentation**

Simplify the referral process

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### **Pre-surgery Assessments**

Psychiatric, social, nutritional and exercise evaluations

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### **Surgery Preparation Checklist**

Tasks that can lead to a more successful surgery

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Step 4:  
Prepare for  
Surgery

## PRE-SURGERY DOCUMENTATION

Mercy offers tools to help make the referral process as easy as possible for your primary care physician.

Some insurance companies require you to have a physician-supervised weight loss program for a specific time period before surgery.

The pre-surgery tools we provide help your physician meet most insurance company requirements. Ask your treatment team for tools you can share with your primary care physician.

## PRE-SURGERY ASSESSMENTS

As you prepare for weight loss surgery, you'll undergo individual assessments.

Your assessments may include:

### Psychiatric & Social Evaluations

Potential conditions that may delay recovery and long-term success

Risk of post-operative depression

Realistic expectations

Ability to comprehend and carry out required lifestyle changes

Appropriate psychological readiness

Commitment to long-term follow-up care

### Nutritional Evaluations

Nutritional status and exams before and after surgery

Individual planning

Readiness to change dietary behaviors

Understanding of healthy food choices and meal planning

.....  
 Step 4:  
 Prepare for  
 Surgery

### Exercise Evaluations

Physical fitness status before and after surgery

Understanding of the importance of exercise for successful obesity treatment

Readiness to change exercise and activity behaviors

Individual exercise and activity planning

Review of the fundamentals of good health and weight maintenance

### Tobacco-Cessation\* Evaluation

A minimum of six weeks being completely tobacco- and nicotine-free

Availability of counseling to assist with cessation

Lab-test confirmation of cessation

*\*A tobacco-cessation assessment may be required. Talk with your treatment coordinator or physician.*

.....  
 Step 4:  
 Prepare for  
 Surgery

### Surgery Preparation Checklist

Review this checklist as you prepare for surgery.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Weight Loss	Meet with a licensed dietitian before surgery to prepare yourself for weight loss. After surgery, a dietitian is a great resource for maintaining weight loss long term.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increased Daily Activity	Boost your daily activity level before surgery to improve cardiovascular function, strengthen muscles and build lean mass.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tobacco Cessation	Check with your treatment coordinator or physician about tobacco-cessation requirements and options to help you stop smoking.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Liquid Diet Instructions	Continue to follow the liquid diet as instructed in your consultation visit.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pain Reliever Usage	During your consultation visit, use of aspirin or non-steroidal medications before surgery will be discussed.

# 5

## Plan Your Hospital Stay

Your hospital stay is typically one to two days, depending on the type of procedure you're having and your recovery.

### What to Expect

Helpful information to review before surgery

## WHAT TO EXPECT

After your surgery is scheduled, your bariatric care team provides specifics on the date, time and other instructions.

Looking ahead to your hospital stay, here are a few other things to know:

### Specialized Equipment

A majority of Mercy's programs are designated as Bariatric Centers of Excellence. That means we offer state-of-the-art medical equipment that supports your special needs as a weight loss surgery patient.

### Typical Procedure Length

Weight loss surgery usually takes from 90 to 120 minutes. If open surgery is performed, there is a vertical incision from 4-8 inches in the upper abdomen area. The laparoscopic approach requires five to seven 1-inch incisions. Your surgeon will discuss options before surgery.

### Length of Hospital Stay

Thanks to our advanced surgical techniques, your estimated hospital stay is just one to two days. An abdominal binder may be used to support your abdominal muscles and incision. You'll receive further instructions on this before and after surgery.

### Movement & Breathing After Surgery

Immediately after surgery, you'll move, walk, cough and practice deep breathing. Remember, the more you move and walk, the lower your risk of forming blood clots or developing pneumonia — and your energy returns much sooner. Using a breathing device provided by the hospital helps you prevent pulmonary complications.

### Discharge From Hospital

You'll be discharged when your surgeon determines it's safe for you to return home. Patients traveling to Mercy for care may need to stay in the area a few days after hospital discharge. This is determined on an individual basis by your surgeon. When traveling home after surgery, you'll need to stop and walk every hour to reduce the risk of blood clots. Plan for rest breaks accordingly.

# 6

## Get Ready for Recovery

After weight loss surgery, you'll make changes to the way you eat, drink and exercise.

### **Discharge Instructions**

You'll receive information on nutrition, physical activity and follow-up care.

.....  
Step 6:  
Get Ready  
for Recovery

## DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

Before you leave the hospital, you'll be given specific instructions on nutrition, physical activity and follow-up care.

As the pounds fall away after surgery, you may take less medication, have more energy, find it easier to breathe and move — and get more out of life. By committing to a healthy lifestyle, you can enjoy long-term success. At Mercy, we're honored to be part of your ongoing journey.

### Nutritional Instructions

You'll receive nutritional instructions at your dietary consultation(s). Continuing the appropriate eating habits learned before surgery helps prevent early swelling and/or stretching of the new stomach. And you'll need to make changes in your menu and eating patterns as instructed by your dietitian.

### Follow-Up Care

Your post-operative care is vital to your recovery and success. We ask you to commit to a minimum of the following visits:

- Immediate post-surgery visit
- One month after surgery
- Three months after surgery
- Six months after surgery
- One year after surgery
- Annually

### Activity Level

We encourage physical movement throughout the day to increase circulation and prevent complications. Check with your bariatric care team on the type and amount of activity that's right for you.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

We're here to help.

For further health information, Mercy recommends the following resources:

- American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
- American Heart Association
- American Diabetes Association
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) MyPlate

Experience a sense of community with others on a weight loss journey by joining our support group.



Scan to learn more, or visit  
[mercy.net/SurgerySupport](https://mercy.net/SurgerySupport)

Obesity is a condition  
you don't have to  
fight alone.

Mercy's bariatric specialists can  
help you shed those pounds and  
discover a healthier, happier you.



Scan to learn more, or visit  
[mercy.net/bariatrics](https://mercy.net/bariatrics)