

Lap Band Surgery - Some Frequently Asked Questions

As obesity in North America grows to become an epidemic, more and more obese and severely overweight people are turning to surgical procedures to help them lose weight. The Lap-Band surgical method is the least invasive surgical weight loss technique.

Q: How does the lap band system work?

A: The BioEnterics Lap-Band System uses a silicone elastomer band placed around the upper part of the stomach. This creates a small stomach pouch at the entry point of the stomach and it can hold only a small amount of food. This smaller pouch at the top of the stomach is connected to the lower part of the stomach by a relatively small outlet created by the band. When you eat, the upper part of the stomach is filled faster and you quickly feel full. The food passes through to the lower part quite a bit more slowly than it otherwise would. So you feel fuller and digestion takes quite a bit longer. This generally reduces the amount of food you eat which in turn helps you lose weight over a period of time.

Q: Is the silicone elastomer band adjustable?

A: Yes, it is adjustable. The band is placed around the stomach through a surgical process called laparoscopy - the least invasive surgical weight loss technique. The band is then connected to a saline reservoir placed under the skin. Saline can be pumped from the reservoir into or extracted from the band to increase or decrease its diameter. This allows the surgeon to control the size of the opening between the upper and lower parts of the stomach.

Q: How much weight can I lose with this system?

A: Tests conducted in the the United States over a 3 year period indicate that the average weight loss was approximately 36-38% of excess weight, 2 and 3 years after surgery. For example, if you weigh 330 pounds and your ideal weight is 155 pounds, then your excess weight is 175 pounds. On the averaged, this person would lose 38% of 175 pounds, or 66.5 pounds, over a 2 to 3 year period.

Q: Will the operation make me sick?

A: If you feel nauseous on a regular basis, there could be a few different reasons. First, you may not be chewing your food properly. Proper chewing is more important because of the reduced size of the upper part of the stomach. Eating the correct diet is also important.

Occasionally patients feel sick if the placement of the band is not quite right. Whenever vomiting is caused by sickness, whether related to the lap band procedure or not, you should see your doctor. Vomiting can cause the band to slip, or lead to a stretching of the small upper part of the stomach.

Q: Will I suffer from constipation?

A: The reduced food intake caused by the procedure may result in smaller stools. This should not cause major problems, but if constipation results, consult your doctor. Usually drinking lots of water will help alleviate the problem.

Q: Will the reduced food intake mean I should take vitamin supplements?

A: Possibly. When you go for your regular check-ups your specialist will make a point of checking to see if you are getting enough vitamin B12, iron, and folic acid.

Q: Are other medications a problem?

A: If you take prescription medication orally you may have to modify the way you take it. Large tablets should be broken up or dissolved in water so they do not irritate the upper stomach pouch. You should probably avoid taking aspirin for the same reason. Capsules generally work better because they dissolve more slowly.

Q: Can the band be removed?

A: The Lap Band System is not meant to be removed, but it can be. Surgeons report that once the band is removed the stomach usually returns to its

original shape. With the band removed you may soon gain your original weight back, and occasionally you may even gain more than you started with.

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