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What about Weight Regain?

Editorial...

We read about weight regain following weight loss surgery all the time in the newspapers. We read about Carnie Wilson regaining her weight. What about our patients? I first started educating patients regarding the Duodenal Switch over 10 years ago. At that time, which was certainly early in our understanding, we assumed that a DS patient would not regain the weight he or she had lost during the first year or two after surgery because of the shortened common limb length that provides malabsorption. The early weight loss that occurs after the DS is mostly due to decreased intake, since the stomach is small and hasn't yet stretched out. With time, meals usually become larger and more frequent, as occurs after the first 6 to 12 months, more calories get eaten. At that point the decreased length of active small intestine prevents much of those ingested calories from getting absorbed the body.

The criteria for satisfactory weight loss is not uniformly accepted in the medical literature and it's not that simple to define "success" after weight loss surgery. Most authors agree that a loss of 50% EBWL (excess body weight loss) is a broadly accepted measure of success. With DS, there are two long-term results extending out 10 years. One is from Dr. Doug Hess in Ohio and the other is from Laval University in Quebec. These studies show 75-85 % excess weight maintained at 10 years. Dr. Anthone's results from USC in Los Angeles show: at 5 years-patients with a BMI > 50, weight loss average is 73% EBWL. BMI < 50-weight loss averages 95% EBWL. Our own published results shows at 24 months post-op our patients average 92% EBWL. What does all this mean to you as a patient? These numbers are averages so any one individual patient can have a significant deviation. There is no guarantee!

What can we do to help prevent weight regain? We talk about the possibility of too much weight loss, and years down the road, possible weight regain. I often share stories from patients we see at our monthly group support meetings. What I have seen recently (from our Ventura satellite office): A 7-½ year post-op male thought his weight regain of 40 pounds was bad. Being a short man, his pre-op wt. was 391, BMI of 61. His weight recently was 208, BMI 35, his % excess weight loss at 7 ½ years is approximately 78%. That is truly a success by all means.

Psychologists, specialists, post-op patients, and insurance companies are all directing attention to this. Regular follow-up with both your surgeon and primary care physician are the best start. Attending monthly group support meetings where this is a common concern with regular discussion. Some patients feel ashamed for weight regain. This is the body's most efficient instinct...the instinct to survive. It is truly an amazing ability of the human body. I think knowing from the beginning of your investigation, your journey will take many turns over your lifetime. Be prepared and arm yourself. We know the basics: limit sugar intake, increase activity, drink your fluids, eat your protein, daily supplements and be current with annual labs and follow-up. These are the basics. When patients start to see weight regain of 5-10 lbs, this is the best time to get hold of it. Clothes start fitting tight, back off on sugar and increase daily activity. It may mean work, but remember you are **fighting an instinct to survive**. We have seen postoperative duodenal switch patients regain 50 lbs back. We have also seen the same

patients get back on track. Please don't beat yourself up and view this as another failure. Look at it as another turn in the journey. The limited absorption hopefully will still give you an edge, some degree of control...but you have to seize that control with commitment to follow-up and personal accountability. No one said surgery is the easy way out; it is hard work and will continue to be a lifetime achievement.....weight loss maintenance. Southern CA patients can see Barbara in the Ventura office. Emails, phone calls, office appointments, and group support meetings can help you get back on track. If you or someone you know is suffering from weight regain with the DS, please contact our office for guidelines and support.