

Bariatric Surgery

Millions of individuals in the United States and around the world are overweight or **obese** (severely overweight). When weight increases to an extreme level, it is called **morbid obesity**. Obesity is associated with diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, some types of cancer, and other medical problems. **Bariatrics** is the field of medicine that specializes in treating obesity. **Bariatric surgery** is the term for operations to help promote weight loss. Bariatric surgical procedures are only considered for people with severe obesity and not for individuals with a mild weight problem. The October 19, 2005, issue of *JAMA* includes several articles about bariatric surgical procedures for the treatment of obesity.

OBESEITY

The **body mass index (BMI)** is a standard way to define overweight, obesity, and morbid obesity. The BMI is calculated based on a person's height and weight—weight in kilograms (2.2 pounds per kilogram) divided by the square of height in meters (39.37 inches per meter). A BMI of 25 or more is considered overweight; 30 or more, obese; and 40 or more, morbidly obese. Bariatric surgery may be offered to patients with severe obesity when medical treatments, including lifestyle changes of healthful eating and regular exercise, have not been effective.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR BARIATRIC SURGERY

Individuals considering bariatric surgery must discuss risks and possible benefits with their doctor. Bariatric surgery has associated risks and long-term consequences and should be considered only one part of an approach to treating obesity. Most bariatric surgeons think that the operations work best when they help promote lifelong behavioral and dietary changes. Long-term follow-up with doctors experienced in the care of patients having these procedures, as well as lifelong vitamin supplementation, is essential to avoid life-threatening complications.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

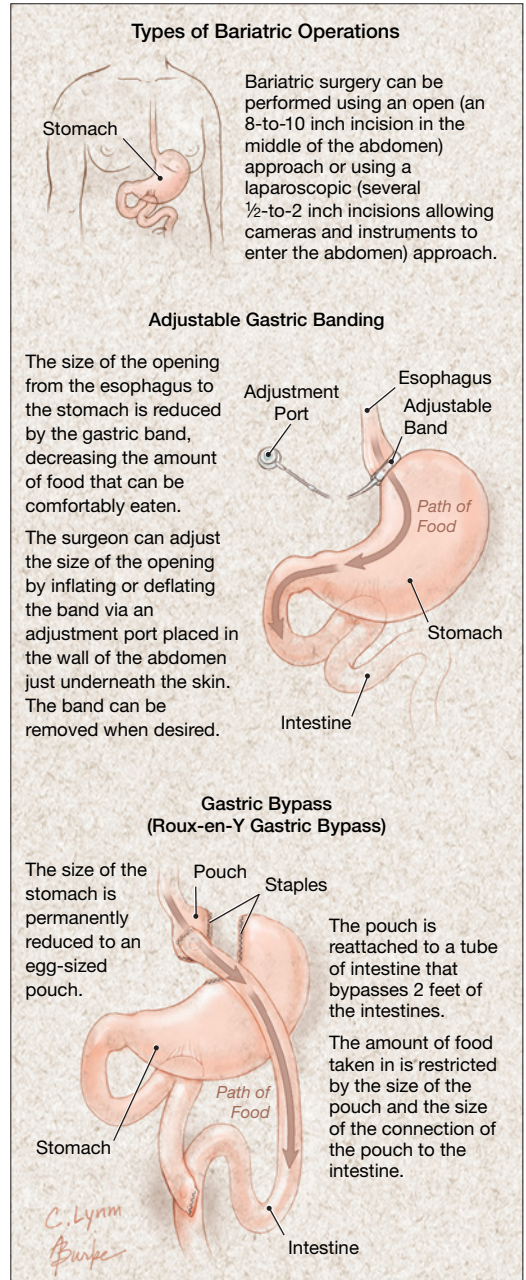
- American Society for Bariatric Surgery
352/331-4900
www.asbs.org
- American Society of Bariatric Physicians
303/770-2526
www.asbp.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
BMI Web Calculator
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. A previous Patient Page on bariatric surgery was published in the December 11, 2002, issue; and one on obesity was published in the April 9, 2003, issue.

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Sources: American Society of Bariatric Physicians; American Society for Bariatric Surgery; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; American Obesity Organization; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

