



**SSMHealth.**

Weight Management Services



# Understanding obesity and your medical options

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## Welcome to SSM Health Weight Management Services

Thank you for your interest in our weight-loss program and for choosing us to assist you in your journey. This guide has been created to introduce you to SSM Health Weight Management Services.

### We treat the chronic disease of obesity through respectful and personalized care.

- We treat obesity seriously, like other chronic diseases, based on current research and evidence.
- We focus on improving our patients' overall health and well-being.
- We focus on long-term weight management, not just weight loss.
- We provide personalized, long-term, sustainable treatment.
- We do not recommend treatments with high failure rates.
- We do not propagate myths.
- We respect patient autonomy.

Our comprehensive weight-loss surgery program has the ultimate goal of helping people live better quality, healthier, and longer lives. We address all your weight management needs. This might include bariatric surgery. We will help you with every step leading up to and following surgery, including dietary modification and support.

### Growing a healthier community

Exercise and eating right are the best ways to lose weight. But many people have tried those methods for years and still can't lose excess weight — weight that can cause serious health problems. For people in this frustrating situation, medically supervised weight loss or bariatric surgery may be an option.

SSM Health Weight Management Services works with patients to provide a holistic approach in the treatment and management throughout our program. We will assist you in making the necessary behavioral changes and in the management of any physical and/or emotional issues associated with your weight. The decision to undergo weight-loss surgery is not one that should be entered into lightly. One must carefully consider the potential risks involved and the anticipated benefits. These potential risks will be reviewed with each individual patient based upon their needs by your surgeon and the Weight Management Services team.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to accompany you on a new journey — one that will be successful in conquering your long-time battle with obesity.

# Understanding obesity and your medical options

## What is obesity?

Obesity is a disease of excess body fat accumulation that impairs health and well-being. It is NOT a simple, self-inflicted, cosmetic problem. It is a serious, complex, chronic disease.

### Who needs treatment?

- If your weight is adversely affecting your health and well-being, you could benefit from treatment.
- Surgical treatment for obesity is an option for well-informed patients who have clinically severe obesity (BMI > 40 or a BMI > 35 and other serious health conditions) and are willing and able to adhere to the lifestyle changes required to maintain a healthy body weight after surgery.

### What causes obesity?

The reasons for obesity are multiple and complex. Despite conventional wisdom, it is not simply a result of overeating. Research has shown that in many cases a significant, underlying cause of morbid obesity is genetic. Studies have demonstrated that once the problem is established, efforts such as dieting and exercise programs have a limited ability to provide effective long-term relief. Science continues to search for answers. But until the disease is better understood, the control of excess weight is something patients must work at for their entire lives. That is why it is very important to understand that all current medical interventions, including weight-loss surgery, should not be considered medical cures. Rather they are attempts to reduce the effects of excessive weight and alleviate the serious physical, emotional, and social consequences of the disease.



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We probably have a number of genes directly related to weight. Just as some genes determine eye color or height, others affect our appetite, our ability to feel full or satisfied, our metabolism, our fat-storing ability, and even our natural activity levels.

## Genetic factors that may play a part

Numerous scientific studies have established that your genes play an important role in your tendency to gain excess weight.

- The body weight of adopted children shows no correlation with the body weight of their adoptive parents, who feed them and teach them how to eat.
- Their weight does have an 80% correlation with their genetic parents, whom they have never met.
- Identical twins, with the same genes, show a much higher similarity of body weights than do fraternal twins, who have different genes.

## Environmental factors

Environmental and genetic factors are also closely intertwined. If you have a genetic predisposition toward obesity, then the modern American lifestyle and environment may make controlling weight more difficult. Having a fast food diet or one that is composed of processed foods versus natural foods, along with having a job where you are not very active (such as sitting at a desk) will contribute to weight gain especially if you do not have a regular exercise routine. Also, where you live, such as in a suburban neighborhood that requires you to use a car to go to work or shop, all magnify hereditary factors such as metabolism and efficient fat storage.

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Find available weight management options in your area at [ssmhealth.com/weight-management](https://www.ssmhealth.com/weight-management).

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## How is obesity treated?

As with most other chronic diseases — like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep apnea — there is no cure for obesity. Individualized, lifelong treatment is necessary. Your options include medically supervised diet and exercise programs, medications, and bariatric surgery.

### **A healthy daily routine is the foundation of obesity treatment.**

Medications and metabolic/bariatric surgery can be added as disease severity increases.

- Medications can decrease the urge to eat, allow satisfaction with less food, and decrease cravings. Not everyone responds to these medications. Unfortunately, most insurance plans do not cover these medications.
- Metabolic/bariatric surgery added to a healthy daily routine is the most effective long-term treatment for severe obesity.

While in the past we assumed bariatric surgeries, such as gastric bypass and sleeve gastrectomy, worked by restricting intake and preventing calorie absorption, the most recent research shows this to be much more complex. Hormonal signals change after these surgeries; the brain agrees to a new, lower set point and does NOT send signals to increase hunger, food seeking, and fat storage. This is the opposite of what happens after weight loss from restrictive dieting.

Metabolic surgery does not work by preventing a person from eating. It works by lowering the “set point,” so that the brain is no longer working to get back to the highest weight. Once the set point is lowered, it must be protected.

### **The effects of metabolic/bariatric surgery on Type 2 Diabetes**

The best evidence we have now shows that metabolic/bariatric surgery offers significant health benefits beyond weight loss. Diabetes remission, lasting at least two years after surgery, occurs in 72–95% of patients treated with surgery compared to 0–21% of patients treated with usual medical treatment.

### **Treatment effectiveness of lifestyle changes and surgery**

- After 2+ years, the average weight loss with lifestyle changes and medication is 5–10% of initial body weight. With this amount of weight loss we can see significant improvements in joint pain, cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and blood sugar.
- After 2+ years, the average weight loss after a bariatric surgery is 20–30% of initial body weight. With this amount of weight loss we can see more significant changes — improvement in mobility, remission of diabetes, decreased sleep apnea, and lowered blood pressure.

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To find a bariatric surgeon, go to [ssmhealth.com/BariatricSurgeons](https://www.ssmhealth.com/BariatricSurgeons).

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## Biology and weight regain

Contrary to popular belief, obesity is not a voluntary choice. Weight regain is not simply the result of “going back to bad habits.” There are very strong biological mechanisms that promote weight regain. The brain defends our highest weight by releasing hormones that signal hunger, food seeking, and fat storage. This “set point” can be raised by the standard American diet, prolonged inactivity, sleep deprivation, stress, and some medications.

However, it is very difficult to lower the set point. It is possible to regain weight after metabolic/bariatric surgery. A healthy daily routine is essential to prevent this. The same things that cause the set point to be raised (the standard American diet, prolonged inactivity, sleep deprivation, stress, and some medications) before surgery can do so after.

## Metabolism

When we think of gaining or losing weight, we typically think of it as a function of calories ingested and then burned. Take in more calories than you burn, gain weight; burn more calories than you ingest, lose weight. But now we know it just isn't that simple. Obesity researchers now talk about a theory called the “set point,” a sort of thermostat in the brain that makes people resistant to either weight gain or loss. If you try to override the set point by drastically cutting your calorie intake, your brain responds by lowering metabolism and slowing activity, and then you gain back any weight you lost.



# Understanding obesity and your medical options

## Eating disorders and medical conditions

Not all weight gain is caused by eating. There are medical conditions, such as hypothyroidism, that can also cause weight gain, and weight-loss surgery is not a solution for these types of conditions. That's why it's important you work with your doctor to make sure you do not have a condition that should be treated with medication and counseling.

### High blood pressure and heart disease

Excess body weight strains and impacts the ability of the heart to function properly. The resulting hypertension (high blood pressure) can inflict significant heart and kidney damage and also lead to strokes.

### Osteoarthritis of weight-bearing joints

The additional weight placed on joints, particularly knees and hips, results in rapid wear and tear, along with pain caused by inflammation. The bones and muscles of the back are also constantly strained, resulting in disc problems, pain, and decreased mobility.

### Sleep apnea and respiratory problems

Fat deposits in the tongue and neck can cause intermittent obstruction of the air passage. Because the obstruction can be increased if you are sleeping on your back, you may find yourself waking frequently to reposition yourself. The resulting loss of sleep often results in daytime drowsiness and headaches, as well as the inability to effectively concentrate on the task at hand.

### Gastroesophageal reflux and heartburn

Acid belongs in the stomach and seldom causes any problem when it stays there. When acid escapes into the esophagus through a weak or overloaded valve at the top of the stomach, the result is called gastroesophageal reflux. "Heartburn" and acid indigestion are common symptoms when this occurs. Approximately 10-15% of patients with even mild sporadic symptoms of heartburn will develop a condition called Barrett's esophagus, which is a premalignant change to the inner lining of the esophagus and a cause of esophageal cancer.

### Depression

Seriously overweight people face many challenges to their emotions: repeated failure with dieting, disapproval from family and friends, sneers and remarks from strangers. They often experience discrimination at work, cannot fit comfortably in theatre seats, on a bus, or in a plane. These multiple emotional insults can lead to clinical depression.

### Infertility

Obese individuals may not be able to conceive or have a diminished ability to produce children.

### Urinary stress incontinence

A large, heavy abdomen and relaxation of the pelvic muscles, especially associated with the effects of childbirth, may cause the valve on the urinary bladder to be weakened, leading to leakage of urine when coughing, sneezing, or laughing.



# Understanding obesity and your medical options

After surgery, you will need to follow these steps to weight-loss success:

## Diet

- Control food portions for calorie reduction.
- Eat healthy foods for good nutrition.

## Exercise

- Engage in physical activities you enjoy for exercise.

## Set goals

- Monitor the success of your weight loss.

## Support

- Find a registered dietitian to learn healthier ways of eating.
- Participate in counseling to deal with the emotional and mental aspects of obesity and weight-loss surgery.
- Join a support group and a weight-loss surgery forum.
- Participate in bariatric exercise programs for motivation and support.



# Understanding obesity and your medical options

## Questions to ask at your upcoming visit

It is important to ask as many questions as possible so you can be completely informed about bariatric surgery options offered at SSM Health. Your physician will answer your questions and address all your concerns. When you are meeting, take a list of questions with you, so you cover all the topics you want to discuss. Some of the questions to ask relate to the doctor's experience and credentials, the cost of care and what services are included, level of follow-up care, recommended procedure based on your health and weight, what changes are expected after surgery, and the possible outcomes after weight-loss surgery.

### Following is a list of recommended questions to ask at your first visit.

Feel free to take notes and write down the answers.

1. How many years have you been a bariatric surgeon?
2. What training have you had in bariatric surgery?
3. Are you a board-certified surgeon?
4. Are you a member of ASBS (American Society of Bariatric Surgery)?
5. Which bariatric surgery would you recommend?
6. What are the advantages of this procedure?
7. What are the disadvantages of this procedure?
8. What are the risks of weight-loss surgery?
9. What are the risks of this procedure?
10. Will you or an assistant perform the procedure?
11. Will you be in the operating room during the entire procedure?
12. Where will the surgery be performed?
13. How many people are on the entire medical team?
14. What pre-op testing will be done?
15. What post-op testing will be done?
16. What changes will I be expected to make with regards to diet and exercise?
17. Do you have an insurance and/or financial coordinator available to patients?
18. Do you have a dietitian available to patients?
19. Do you have a mental health provider available to patients?
20. Do you have a support group for patients?
21. Do you have someone I can call if I have a question during non-office hours?
22. What is my expected weight loss?
23. Do you have patients who are willing to share their experiences with me?

My notes:

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# Understanding obesity and your medical options

## Your life will change

At SSM Health Weight Management Services, we are committed to providing our patients with the most current and accurate information possible to ensure that their decision to undergo a weight-loss procedure is an informed one. That is why we believe our patients should make the decision to participate in a medically supervised weight-loss program or to have bariatric surgery only after careful consideration, extensive research, and consultation with an experienced bariatric surgeon and multi-disciplinary support team. A team who will be involved in your care both before surgery and in the years afterwards.

Support and motivation are important in helping you meet your weight-loss goals after bariatric surgery. As we said earlier, weight-loss surgery is not a quick fix or a short cut to weight loss, however, it is an effective treatment for morbid obesity. Significant weight loss will occur if you follow the recommended surgery diet, exercise, and lifestyle guidelines set by the bariatric surgeon, registered dietitian, therapist, and other SSM Health Weight Management Services staff.

This is a lifelong relationship and weight-loss surgery will only succeed with lifelong commitment from the patient. With bariatric surgery, risks are taken upfront in hopes of long-term benefit and improved quality of life. Ultimately, the decision to have the procedure is entirely up to you. After having heard all the information, you must decide if the benefits outweigh the risks and potential complications. This surgery is only one of many tools to



help with your weight loss. Your success depends on your commitment and use of the weight-loss surgery tools when making lifestyle changes related to diet, exercise, and long-term follow-up.

We look forward to your visit and joining you on your weight-loss journey.

### Contact information:

#### SSM Health Weight Management Services

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#### Insurance coverage

Insurance coverage varies. Call your insurance company to find out if you have coverage.

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All of our hospitals, doctor's offices, and other facilities have implemented enhanced safety measures. These include requiring all individuals to be screened for symptoms and requiring face masks for all upon entry. This will ensure you and your family are protected every step of the way.