



FAQs for Sleeve Gastrectomy Surgery



Stephanie McCandless
Lost 131 lbs
With gastric
sleeve surgery

UPMC | JAMESON

What is sleeve gastrectomy?

With sleeve gastrectomy, also known as vertical gastric sleeve, the surgeon removes part of the stomach to create a long narrow tube or banana shape. Approximately two-thirds of the stomach is removed during this procedure. The smaller tube shape restricts food intake and increases the sense of fullness after eating. This procedure is performed laparoscopically with several small incisions in the abdomen.

What are some of the short-term and long-term complications from surgery?

All surgical procedures have some risks. The risks and benefits are discussed in detail with each patient. These include, but are not limited to leak, bleeding from stomach staple line, narrowing of the stomach (stricture), reflux, blood clots, infection, and nausea.

What are the signs and symptoms of a leak?

A leak may occur anywhere from several days after surgery to several months after surgery. Signs and symptoms may range from abdominal pain, rapid heart rate, fever, shortness of breath, left shoulder pain, cough. Should you experience any of these symptoms following discharge, please notify your surgeon and/or surgeon's staff immediately.

Who is a candidate for surgery?

The patient:

- Must have a BMI (body mass index) over 35 with associated medical problems related to their weight, or a BMI over 40 kg/m²
- Must be older than 18
- Must have failed programmed and/or supervised diet therapy for a period of at least one year
- Must be willing to make significant lifestyle changes including diet, exercise, and vitamin supplementation
- Must be committed to long-term follow-up care
- Must understand the procedure and the risks

What testing is required prior to surgery?

There are multiple tests required after your evaluation with the surgeon. An upper endoscopy is required for all patients undergoing sleeve gastrectomy. This is an outpatient procedure performed by the surgeon. The physician uses an endoscope—a small, flexible tube with a light and camera—to examine the lining of the upper digestive tract (esophagus, stomach, and first part of the small intestine or duodenum). A consultation with a nutritionist and a psychiatrist are also required. Other testing such as sleep study, lung testing, and heart testing may be indicated according to your medical history.

Can sleeve gastrectomy be reversed?

Sleeve gastrectomy is considered a permanent alteration of the stomach. Consideration for surgical revision is only indicated in a small number of patients with significant complications.

How much weight can I expect to lose and can I regain weight?

Most patients lose approximately 60 to 70 percent of their excess body weight over a period of 12 to 18 months after surgery. Maintenance of long-term weight stability depends upon diet and exercise.

How long can I expect to be hospitalized?

Depending on the patient, hospital stay can vary from one to two days. Complete recovery is expected two to four weeks from surgery.



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Your Resource for Bariatric Recovery

Bariatric surgery is more than an operation—it's a decision that signals a commitment to a healthier lifestyle. Following surgery, your health care team will review a post-bariatric surgery diet plan designed to help your body adapt to healthier eating habits. You and your doctor will be able to decide when it is safe for you to move to the next phase of the diet plan, as the process is individualized for each patient.

UPMC has created a website that can assist you during your recovery. This tool will help you through each phase by providing lists of recommended foods and supplements for each stage, as well as delicious recipes to try throughout your recovery period. Visit bariatricdiet.upmc.com to explore recommended tips, foods, and recipes.

Will my insurance company pay for the procedure?

Most insurance companies are currently covering the cost of the sleeve gastrectomy; however, most will require at least 6-12 consecutive months of documented diet history. They typically also require nutrition and psychiatric consultations. Information must also be provided to the insurance companies documenting medical necessity. Patients seeking surgery should check their insurance information for obesity clauses or call their provider with specific questions.

What is the progression to the diet after surgery?

The diet is advanced by the physician or staff caring for the patient. Phase I, liquid diet, is initiated after surgery and lasts approximately two weeks. Phase II, soft diet, is approximately two weeks, and Phase III, solid foods, is thereafter.

What are the most common food intolerances after surgery?

Food intolerances vary from patient to patient, however, the most common intolerances are to breads, white rice, pasta, Chinese food, and red meat.

What is the expected follow-up after surgery?

Office follow-up varies from surgeon to surgeon; however, is usually two weeks after surgery, four weeks after surgery, and then every two to three months for the first year. Office follow-up is annually thereafter.

Do you have a support group for patients?

UPMC Jameson offers patient and family support groups in New Castle and Hermitage. The meetings are held monthly and are free to patients and family members. Please call 724-656-0067 for more information.

Will I require vitamin supplementation after surgery?

Lifelong daily multivitamins with iron, vitamin D, and vitamin B12 will be required. Other supplements may be necessary if you are not eating well-balanced meals.

Will plastic surgery be necessary after weight loss?

Plastic surgery is a personal option. You should meet with a plastic surgeon once your weight has stabilized, which is usually between 12 and 18 months following surgery. At this meeting, you can discuss problem areas with excess skin, and the plastic surgeon can evaluate you for surgery and can discuss insurance coverage.

Is pregnancy possible following weight loss?

Pregnancy can occur after weight loss; however, we do not recommend pregnancy for the first full year following sleeve gastrectomy. Waiting will allow you to achieve maximum weight loss and permit your body to recover from surgery and weight loss.

For more information, call 724-656-0067 or visit us at UPMCJameson.com.