

## **Educate Yourself Before Mulling Bariatric Surgery**

Dr. AJAY GOYAL

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Q1: I am 320 pounds and a 31 year-old father of two small children. I have tried numerous diets and cannot seem to lose the weight. I have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and insomnia. Am I too young to have **bariatric surgery**? How do I know if this surgery is right for me, and how do I find a good surgeon?

A1: You are not too young to have **bariatric surgery**. The younger you are when you tackle your weight and health issues, the better chance you have at living a healthier and longer life. A bariatric surgeon can help determine if this procedure is right for you.

First, to ensure you have a qualified surgeon, make sure your doctor is board certified by the American Board of Surgery. Contact the American Board of Surgery at (215) 568-4000 for this information. The doctor also should be a fellowship-trained bariatric surgeon. This means the surgeon has completed one year of training in laparoscopic **bariatric surgery** in addition to general surgery. The doctor's office will be able to provide you with this documentation. Also make sure your surgeon is qualified in laparoscopic (minimally invasive) as well as open surgery so that you have a wider range of surgical options.

Next, look for a bariatric center that is designated as a **Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence** by the Surgical Review Corporation. Go to [www.surgicalreview.org](http://www.surgicalreview.org) to learn more. This designation means the center has the resources to perform safe **bariatric surgery**, and has demonstrated excellent short and long-term outcomes with a full range of services dedicated to bariatrics.

At Overlook Hospital's Center for Advanced **Bariatric Surgery** in Summit, we ensure the best patient care and weight loss success by using a multidisciplinary team approach, including nutritional, psychological and physical therapy counseling. Although there are risks when undergoing **bariatric surgery**, with aggressive preoperative evaluations and post-operative follow-up by our clinical team, we are able to maintain a zero mortality rate.

The two most common procedures are Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery and

laparoscopic adjustable gastric band. In Laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery, a surgeon will use staples to separate a small pouch at the top of the stomach from the rest of the organ. A hole is then cut in the pouch, and the lower part of the small intestine is rerouted to it. The small pouch serves as your functioning stomach, limiting the amount of food you can eat. Food bypasses the lower stomach and upper part of the small intestine and is digested in the lower part of your small intestine.

Gastric bypass surgery is a restrictive-malabsorbative procedure because it not only limits the volume of food you can eat, but it also leads to decreased absorption of fat and calories, thereby limiting your daily caloric intake.

Laparoscopic gastric band is a surgical procedure in which an adjustable band is placed around the stomach near its upper end, creating a small pouch and a narrow passage into the larger remainder of the stomach.

Your surgeon can help you determine which procedure is right for you. In addition to dramatic weight loss, many individuals experience improved health and no longer require medication to manage high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, sleep apnea and acid reflux disease.

**Bariatric surgery** does not replace the need for following a healthy diet and regular physical activity program. As you consider weight-loss surgery, make sure that you make every effort to exercise, change your eating habits and adjust any other lifestyle factors that have contributed to your excess weight.

Weight-loss surgery is a serious procedure that involves the dedication of the patient, physician and medical weight loss team. It is not easy. As people who have struggled with weight loss issues their entire life know, there is no simple solution. But with patience, motivation and commitment to lifestyle changes, surgical weight loss can lead to a longer and healthier life.

You are invited to a free tour and information session at Overlook Hospital's Center for Advanced **Bariatric Surgery**. Sessions are held twice each month.

Dr. Ajay Goyal is the director of **bariatric surgery** and associate director of Minimally Invasive Surgery at Atlantic Health's Overlook Hospital in Summit.

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Website: [www.NJBariatricCenter.com](http://www.NJBariatricCenter.com)  
Phone: 908-378-1779