

Gastric Surgery

What is gastric surgery?

Gastric surgery is an alternative name for weight-loss surgery. There are a variety of procedures; the two main types of gastric surgery are called gastric bypass and gastric banding (otherwise known as Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and the LAP-BAND system or LAGB). Both of these procedures limit the patient's food intake by restricting the size of the stomach, and ultimately contributing to weight loss. Please note, patients tend to lose more weight following gastric bypass surgery, but your doctor or surgeon will need to determine the best procedure for you.

Who can benefit from having gastric surgery?

Individuals who are classed as obese or morbidly obese (those with a BMI – body mass index – of over 30) can benefit from gastric surgery if previous attempts to lose weight have been unsuccessful. However, your doctor or specialist will make the final decision on whether you can be put forward for gastric surgery, which will depend on a variety of factors.

Procedure

Both of these types of gastric surgery are performed under general anesthetic, and can take up to several hours.

- ✓ **Gastric bypass surgery** - Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery can be performed using laparoscopic (keyhole) or open surgery.
 - ✓ Open surgery - Open gastric bypass surgery is more invasive than the laparoscopic approach, and involves a large cut across the abdomen. The surgeon will staple part of the stomach in two, using the upper part of the stomach to create a small 'pouch' for food. A section of the small intestine is then removed and reattached to the pouch. This means that as the food passes into your digestive system, not as much is absorbed into the body. The incisions are then usually closed using staples.
 - ✓ Laparoscopic surgery - Laparoscopic surgery involves the surgeon making several small incisions into the abdomen. A laparoscope – a tube with a camera attached – is then inserted into one of the incisions so that the surgeon can see the procedure on a TV screen. Small instruments are then passed through the incisions to perform the gastric surgery. The process is then performed in the same way as open surgery, but involves minimal scarring and usually a quicker recovery period.
- ✓ **LAP-BAND system (LAGB)** - Gastric surgery using the LAP-BAND system (LAGB) is also done laparoscopically. It involves an inflatable band being wrapped around the upper part of the stomach – sectioning the stomach in two and creating a small 'pouch' for food. The band can be adjusted externally, similar to that of a belt,

allowing your surgeon to control your food intake. The gastric band limits the amount of food your stomach can hold, and the processing time of the intestines to digest the food, helping you to eat less and feel 'fuller' more quickly.

Recovery period

Recovery following gastric surgery can depend on the type of procedure performed.

- ✓ **Gastric bypass recovery** - Gastric bypass surgery patients who have undergone 'open' surgery will need to stay in hospital for around five days following surgery. Those who have had laparoscopic surgery can usually leave hospital within 24 hours. You will be placed on a liquefied diet for several weeks, as your 'new' stomach will only hold a very small amount of food (this will expand over time). Supplements will be provided to ensure you are getting all the nutrients needed within your diet. Stomach staples will be removed around 10 days after gastric surgery if necessary.
- ✓ **LAP-BAND recovery** - As with gastric bypass surgery, you will be put on a liquid diet for a few weeks following your gastric surgery, after which solids will slowly be reintroduced. Your band will probably be adjusted 2-3 times over the first few months following surgery.

Risks

Gastric surgery is a major surgery and there can be complications. These include infection of the wound, bleeding, developing a hernia and breathing problems as a reaction to the anesthetic. Nutrient deficiencies resulting in anemia and osteoporosis, breakdown of the pouch, blood clots, gallstones, failure to lose weight, and a very rare chance of fatality are also possible risks, among others.