



# Weight Loss Surgery Tips

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*Navigating  
Toward Better  
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## BARIATRIC SURGERY—A POWERFUL TOOL

A power tool helps get a job done faster and easier than manual methods, but if it is to be useful, it can't be left in the box and stored in the garage. It needs to be removed from the case, the battery charged, and put to use as it was intended. Power tools, if not used according to directions, it can be downright dangerous, and instead of making the job easier and faster, can end up causing damage or injury.

Bariatric surgery can be a phenomenally life-changing power tool. And as the power tool, unwrapped and used as instructed, it can dramatically change your life, reverse health problems, increase energy, help raise your self-esteem, and extend your life. Left unused and wrapped in the case, it is a useless and expensive waste.

## INFORMATION OVERLOAD

As you anticipate your surgery, and recover from it, you will be bombarded with a lot of information and it may feel overwhelming at times. It is important to remember the information and instructions are for your protection and to help you along the way. Following them will help you get the most out of this helpful new tool. And if you have questions, be sure to ask someone for help.

## **WORKING TOWARD A SMOOTH ADJUSTMENT**

The following top twenty tips are part of the “instruction manual” to help you properly use your new bariatric surgery power tool:

### **1. Take your medications as directed.**

Never stop taking your medicine or increase/decrease doses without consulting your doctor. This includes over-the-counter medications.

### **2. Keep your doctor appointments.**

Make follow up visits to your doctor the highest priority, even when you are feeling good.

### **3. Remember to take a multiple vitamin and calcium supplement every day.**

Chewable varieties are available and may be easier to digest for the first few months. They are best absorbed if taken at meal time.

**4. Choose three small meals each day.** Your stomach will only be able to hold about one cup of food at a time after surgery, so it is extremely important to choose nutritious foods.

### **5. Focus on protein at each meal.**

Eat your protein first, with a goal of eating 50-60 grams of protein each day. Protein will help you feel full longer and maintain muscle mass while you are losing weight.

**6. Eat mindfully.** Take 20-30 minutes to savor your meal. Eating too fast can cause nausea, vomiting, and pain. Remember, it takes time for your body to perceive your stomach is full.

**7. Take small bites and be intentional about chewing your food well.** The opening from the pouch into your intestines is very small and foods not chewed well may block this opening, causing pain, nausea, and vomiting. Be sure to chew meats especially thoroughly.



- 8. At mealtime, reserve the space in your stomach for nutritious foods, not liquid.** Don't drink anything for at least 30 minutes before or after a meal. This allows your stomach to process nutrients more effectively.
- 9. Choose to stay away from concentrated sweets and sugar.** These will spike your blood sugar, cause hunger pangs, and slow weight loss. They will also cause dumping syndrome (nausea, diarrhea, weakness, rapid pulse and cold sweats) which occurs when the food you've eaten moves out of your stomach too quickly.
- 10. Stay hydrated, without using sugary, carbonated beverages.** This includes avoiding regular soda, sugared drink mixes, or fruit drinks as their highly concentrated calories offer no nutritional value, will slow your weight loss, and can also cause dumping syndrome. Instead, chose water, sugar-free drink mixes, or herbal tea. Avoid bubbly, carbonated drinks as they increase pressure in your stomach and your staples/sutures.
- 11. Skip all alcoholic drinks.** Not only are they empty calories, but your body will be very sensitive to the effects of alcohol.
- 12. Choose fruit rather than fruit juice.** Your body will process the nutrition in fruit more effectively than in fruit juice and will keep you full longer.
- 13. Try to exercise every day.** Start with a short walk and gradually increase your distance, the amount of time you exercise, and how hard you work during your exercise.
- 14. Choose a new, more active lifestyle.** Join a bowling team, participate in a swimming club, take up camping and hiking, or find walking trails or parks. The ways to help you be more active are endless.
- 15. Stop eating when you are full.** Eating even a few more bites will make you feel uncomfortable, may slowly stretch the gastric pouch, and can increase your tolerance for larger portions. By continually pushing the limits, as the days, weeks, and months go by, you will eat more and may regain the weight you lost.
- 16. Avoid snacking.** You can take in a lot of calories without realizing it or feeling satisfied. Snack foods are low in nutrition, so try drinking water or sugar-free beverages if you feel hungry between meals.
- 17. Choose to give and receive encouragement.** Statistics show those who choose to participate in a support group are more likely to succeed in their weight loss goals. And it allows you to be helpful to others as well.
- 18. Develop healthy stress-management and coping skills.** Read a book, call a friend, join a club, take a class, or learn new relaxation techniques.
- 19. Discover healthy restaurant options and habits.** Begin any restaurant meal by requesting a take home container and reserve half your meal for tomorrow's lunch.
- 20. Say farewell to caffeine.** Because it is a diuretic, caffeine will defeat your attempts to stay hydrated. It can also alter your mood and increase the risk of stomach ulcers.

## WHEN TO CALL YOUR SURGEON:

- You develop a high fever (over 101°)
- You have difficulty keeping fluids down
- You develop difficulty breathing or are short of breath
- Your stools become dark or tarry (bloody)
- Your pain level becomes uncontrollable
- You notice severe leg pain
- You suddenly notice inexplicable bruising with little cause
- Your incisions begin to drain or bleed heavily



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Hal Baumchen, PsyD, LP, LADC** is the President and Clinical Director of NorthStar Regional. He is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist (LP) and a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) with over 30 years of counseling experience.

He received his Master's Degree from Wheaton Graduate School, his Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD) from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and his Certificate in Co-Occurring Disorders from Adler Graduate School. He serves frequently as a seminar leader, and has taught workshops in the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and India.

He is the author of *Journeys* and *Destinations*, two books on co-occurring disorders treatment, and the co-author of *Finding Hope Again: Overcoming Depression* with Dr. Neil T. Anderson.

*This information in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional help or to be used as a diagnostic tool. If you have serious difficulties with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, please seek professional help.*