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Gastric Banding Surgery for Weight Loss

January 2013

IT'S YOUR HEALTH

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THE ISSUE

The number of **Canadians who are overweight or obese** has increased over the past several years. Today, approximately **one in four Canadian adults are obese**.



Obesity can put you at risk for a number of chronic diseases. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce this risk and improve your overall health. Before considering surgery, look at all your treatment options.

WEIGHT LOSS TREATMENTS

Weight loss treatments for people who are obese include:

- healthy eating
- exercise
- prescription/non-prescription drugs and natural health products
- weight loss surgery (also known as bariatric surgery)

Weight loss surgery may be a beneficial treatment for those who have been unable to lose weight using more traditional methods like diet, exercise or medication. It is usually only recommended* for people who are morbidly obese with a **body mass index (BMI)** of at least 40 or in obese individuals with a BMI over 35 that also suffer from at least one other medical problems related to obesity, such as heart disease, diabetes or breathing problems. Currently, one of the most common types of weight loss surgery is gastric banding.

GASTRIC BANDS

Gastric banding is a minimally-invasive procedure that involves making a few short incisions in the abdomen to insert a **gastric band**. A miniature camera is also used to help position the band in the right area.



Gastric bands (also known as adjustable gastric bands) are medical devices implanted during gastric banding surgeries to help patients achieve weight loss and overall

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health benefits. Like other health products, gastric bands may pose certain safety risks.

The gastric band is a silicone device that fits like a bracelet around the top of the stomach, just below the junction between the esophagus and the stomach. This results in a pouch about the size of a golf ball and produces a narrow outlet that restricts the amount of food that can be eaten. The band is lined by an inflatable cuff or collar that is joined to a port just below the skin of the abdomen. This allows physicians to easily adjust the size of the outlet post-surgery by adding or removing saline solution to the cuff through the port. This changes the amount of food that can fit comfortably in the stomach.

Gastric banding surgery can be an effective way to lose weight, provided patients follow certain lifestyle modifications including eating restrictions and other behavioural changes.

RISKS RELATED TO THE SURGERY

All surgery has risks, some risks associated with weight loss surgery are:

- bleeding
- swelling
- infection
- pain
- bruising
- stomach perforation
- damage to adjacent organs
- ulcers
- stomach irritation
- heartburn
- death

Certain patients may be at higher risk of some of these complications due to their obesity or other pre-existing medical conditions. There are also risks from the

anesthetics and other drugs used around the time of surgery.

RISKS RELATED TO GASTRIC BANDS

The most commonly reported adverse events in gastric band recipients are:

- erosion of the band through the stomach wall
- band tearing, leaking, or coming apart
- obstruction of the outlet
- slippage or migration of the band from its intended location
- band deflation (due to distension/ bloating or dilation/enlarging of the esophagus)

Many of these incidents can occur months or years after the surgery and may require additional procedures to correct the problem or to remove the band.

REDUCE YOUR RISK BEFORE SURGERY

Think about whether gastric banding is right for you

Carefully consider these points:

- Have you tried to lose weight before? This surgery may be appropriate for people who have failed to lose weight using more traditional methods such as diet and exercise.
- Are you obese? Gastric banding surgery is usually only recommended for people who are morbidly obese (**BMI 40+**), or for those who are obese and also suffer from other medical problems related to obesity such as heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Do you have any other pre-existing medical conditions? People with stomach disorders or a dependence on alcohol or drugs aren't eligible for gastric banding surgery.

Participate in a pre-operative consultation with your prospective surgeon



Here are some common topics that should be covered during this session:

- Is gastric banding the right choice for you given your medical history, weight management history, and other available weight loss treatments. Discuss all your options including alternative surgical treatments.
- Ask about your physician's experience with different weight loss surgeries, and with gastric banding in particular. Include the number of surgeries they've performed and what complications they have seen in the past.
- Your expected commitment with respect to diet, exercise, behaviour modification, and follow-up care.
- The expected benefits and limitations of gastric banding.

Inform yourself

- Try to speak to other patients who have had gastric band surgery about their experiences.
- Read the product labelling for the gastric band. Manufacturers of gastric bands must produce device labelling (or instructions for use) that contains specific information about the device. Additional information may be found online, or in guides and brochures at your physician's office.



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REDUCE YOUR RISK AFTER SURGERY

It's important to understand the long-term commitment required to achieve success with gastric banding.

- Carefully follow the instructions that have been given to you after your surgery. Speak with your physician if you have any questions.
- Permanent and significant modifications to eating habits and food choices are required for gastric banding to be effective.
- Long-term monitoring by your physician and/or dietician will be required.

HEALTH CANADA'S ROLE

Health Canada is the Canadian federal authority that regulates medical devices such as gastric bands. *The Medical Devices Regulations (MDR)* fall under the authority of the *Food and Drugs Act* and apply to all medical devices imported or sold in Canada.

Health Canada is responsible for the review of medical devices to assess their safety and effectiveness and quality before being authorized for sale in Canada. As well, the department is responsible for ensuring that products are compliant by conducting inspections, investigating complaints, monitoring recalls and issuing licenses to establishments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To report complaints about gastric bands and other medical devices, contact us online at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/compli-conform/prob-report-rapport/gui-0060_prob-rpt_doc-eng.php or call our toll-free hotline at 1-800-267-9675.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada, Obesity in Canada at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/2009/oc/index-eng.php
- *It's Your Health* – Obesity at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/obes-eng.php
- *It's Your Health* – The safe use of health products for weight loss at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/weight-amaigr-eng.php
- *It's Your Health* – Type 2 Diabetes at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/diabete-eng.php
- Diabetes web section at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/dc-ma/diabete-eng.php
- *It's Your Health* – Heart Disease at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/heart-coeur-eng.php
- *It's Your Health* – Stroke at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/stroke-vasculaire-eng.php
- Medical Devices web section at: www.health.gc.ca/medicaldevices
- Database of medical devices licensed in Canada at: <http://webprod3.hc-sc.gc.ca/mdll-limh/index-eng.jsp>

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FOR INDUSTRY AND PROFESSIONALS

- Medical device application information at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/md-im/applic-demande/index-eng.php
- Medical device legislation and guidelines at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/md-im/legislation/index-eng.php
- Drug and medical device recall listings at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/compli-conform/recall-retrait/_list/index-eng.php

RELATED RESOURCES

- For reliable health and safety information visit the Healthy Canadians website at: www.healthycanadians.gc.ca
- For more articles on health and safety issues, go to the *It's Your Health* web section at: www.health.gc.ca/iyh

You can also call toll free at
1-866-225-0709 or TTY at
1-800-267-1245*

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