

WHAT'S NEXT?

WEIGHT LOSS SURGERIES

*Guiding You
Through the Process*

Solution 4 Obesity
ARE YOU READY ⁴ A CHANGE?

You've decided to have surgery.

You've decided which procedure you want to have. Now what?

VISIT YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

Discuss your intention to have weight loss surgery with your primary doctor. Your doctor knows your health best. While it's not necessary, ask your doctor if you need a short pre-operative physical before you travel. Your surgeon will do all preoperative testing; however it's a good idea to be examined by your doctor. Your doctor may discover or advise you of a condition that may require treatment prior to having surgery. This can save you time and the travel expense of discovering the condition during your preoperative tests after arrival only to have to reschedule your surgery for a later date.

CHECK TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

Check for passport or other requirements. You will need a passport to fly into Mexico. Please check with your patient coordinator for the latest travel requirements or go to http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. Decide who (or if) you want to take someone with you. Does that person have the necessary current travel documents?



BE INFORMED

Read up on your chosen procedure. Look for articles and books on the subject.

The Internet is a great source of information. Read everything you can find. You can't be too educated on the procedure you're about to have. The more you know the better. Below are some good sites to find information:

<http://www.asbs.org/>
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/weightlossurgery.html>
<http://www.obesityhelpblog.com/>
<http://www.obesityhelp.com/>
<http://www.weightlossurgeryinfo.com/dtcf/>
<http://www.safemexicosurgery.com/>

SITES SPECIFIC TO ADJUSTABLE GASTRIC BANDING:

<http://www.lapband.com/lapband/portal.do>
<http://www.realizeband.com/dtcf/pages/home.htm>

CHOOSING A SURGEON

When self paying for surgery, many patients choose to travel away from home for surgery due to economic and other reasons. The most important goal is to choose the best surgeon for your money. However, cost alone should not be the main criteria. Do not bargain shop when the surgeon you choose will literally be holding your life in his/her hands, cost should be at the bottom of your list. While you want to find a price you can afford, there are other factors that should be at the top of your list.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

- Check to be sure your surgeon is board certified.
- If your surgery will be performed using the laparoscopic approach, ask about the surgeon's laparoscopic training and experience.
- How many bariatric surgeries has the surgeon performed?
- Is he/she a member of any bariatric, endoscopic or laparoscopic organizations?
- Any other relevant certifications or affiliations?
- Which hospital is the surgeon on staff of and/or affiliated with?
- What other certifications does the surgeon have?
- How many surgeries a day does the surgeon perform? Will you get personal attention, good care and follow up or does the surgeon do so many surgeries per day that they virtually have a revolving door?
- Choose a surgeon that is proficient in more than one bariatric surgery. This qualifies them as a "Bariatric" surgeon, not a surgeon that has just been trained in one procedure. You want to receive good factual information, not one sided information just to sway you into having the only surgery that surgeon performs.
- Choosing a surgeon experienced in more than one procedure is beneficial in the event you experience poor weight loss and desire a revision or to be converted to another surgery.



CHOOSE YOUR SURGEON YOURSELF:

- When you contact a surgeon's office, ask if they represent that surgeon or if they are representing a group or hospital program.
- You should be able to speak to the surgeon prior to surgery to ask questions and confirm that the surgeon you chose will actually be performing your surgery.

- Does the surgeon perform the entire surgery himself? Most surgeons have assistants that assist during surgery, but the surgeon you choose should be the lead surgeon, perform the surgery from start to finish and be in the OR the entire time.
- Ask if the surgeon will be handling all of your follow up care himself. If he/she has an assistant that helps with follow up care, can you request that your surgeon do your follow up care himself if you so choose?
- Make sure your surgeon's patient coordinator is attentive and responds to you promptly

THE HOSPITAL:

- Ask where your surgery will be performed. Make sure you will be in a hospital, not a clinic or surgery center. All bariatric surgeries are considered major surgery and are being performed on morbidly obese patients. Moreover, many patients have co-morbidities such as high blood pressure or diabetes and will be going under general anesthesia. You need to be in a hospital that is equipped to handle any additional needs that may arise.
- Ask if the hospital is fully equipped with an ICU, Emergency Room, Cardiologist on staff and if there is blood readily available if needed.
- Is the surgeon's office near the hospital?

WHAT NOT TO DO

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Remember when traveling, especially outside of the U.S. you should verify all claims made about the surgeon's experience and most other things you may be told. All competent and ethical surgeons can verify their credentials and certifications.

If the Price is Very Low, Be Suspicious! Locations all over the world differ in price, sometimes greatly. However, you should become familiar with the going rate of surgery in the area you're looking to. Stay away from bargain prices. There is a reason it's cheaper. Corners are being cut and your well being is at risk.

Don't Have Bariatric Surgery in a "Clinic" or "Surgery Center."

Even Lap Band surgery should be done in a hospital! While this might be acceptable for certain instances in the U.S., other countries may not have the same emergency response system in place in case of an emergency. For instance, if you have surgery in a clinic or surgery center and you need to be transported to a hospital, the emergency response in Mexico is nothing like in the U.S. It often takes at least 30 minutes or even much longer for response personnel to respond to an emergency. Then you will need to go to a hospital where your surgeon is on staff and they will want you to pay before being admitted.

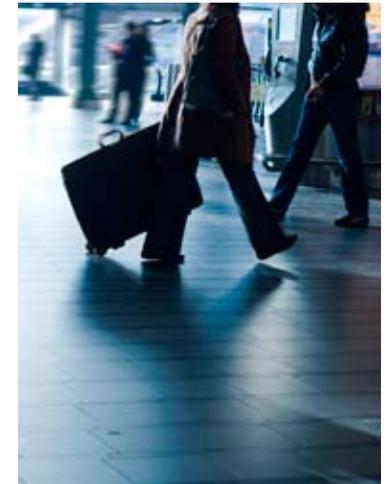
Price Negotiating.

Be wary of surgeons that will price match other surgeons just to get your business. Again, they will cut corners in order to price bargain with you. Un-reputable surgeons also cut costs by reusing surgical instruments that are designed for single use.

You can avoid these types of scenarios by choosing a reputable surgeon!

YOU'VE CHOSEN YOUR SURGEON AND WILL BE TRAVELING FOR SURGERY... NOW WHAT?

- Plan your arrival flight early in the day for pre-operative testing and getting settled in.
- Plan your departure flight home for later in the day so you're not rushed. You may need extra time at the airport or in customs.
- Make sure you provide your accurate flight itinerary information to your coordinator so you will be picked up at the airport at the proper time. Your coordinator will make your hotel and shuttle arrangements.
- Make sure you pack your travel documents.
- Pack comfortable loose clothing and clothing you can layer
- Bring money for shopping or personal items.
- You do not need to bring bottled water, tea or other liquids. There are grocery stores close by, but if you prefer certain favorites, you may want to pack some with you.
- Remember to begin any preoperative fasting you were instructed to begin in preparation for preoperative testing.



WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- Usually preoperative testing is performed immediately before of after hotel check in or hospital admission.
- You will meet with your surgeon
- You will meet with your anesthesiologist
- You will be given information regarding your procedure and have opportunities to discuss your questions and concerns with your surgeon and members of his team.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

- You will be given IV pain medications as needed.
- You will be encouraged to walk as soon as you are fully awake.
- Your surgeon will check on you several times after your procedure. He will also go over instructions regarding follow up and diet and allow you to ask any questions you may have.
- You will be provided with instructions on when and how to contact your surgeon with post operative questions and concerns.
- You will be given ice chips and/or small sips of liquids. As soon as you're able to tolerate enough liquids to sustain hydration, your IV will be removed.
- Adjustable Gastric Band patients are usually released to return home 2-3 days after surgery. Vertical Sleeve Gastrectomy patients usually are released to return home 4 – 6 days after surgery. Gastric Bypass patients should expect to be released to travel home 5 – 8 days after surgery.
- Once released, your driver will take you back to the airport for your return flight home.

LIFE AFTER SURGERY

- Upon your return home, you will be on clear liquids.
- Begin your vitamin supplements as directed by your surgeon
- After you have tolerated clear liquids, you will move on to full liquids
- Depending on which procedure you had, you may then move on to pureed foods then slowly to soft foods.
- Finally all patients will eventually move to solid foods.
- Remember to drink plenty of non-calorie liquids between meals
- Once you have received an okay from your surgeon, begin an exercise program. Begin slowly and gradually increase your time and intensity.
- Join a support group. You should look in your community or join one online. Seek out others that have had or are interested in weight loss surgery. Support each other!
 - Surround yourself with positive people that will encourage you.
 - Be prepared for those that may want to sabotage your efforts because they don't want you to be thin while they remain fat.



ENJOY LIFE!

- Get out and meet new people
- Do the things you could never do before
- Do things that you wouldn't do because you were embarrassed
- Do something you've never done before
- Go somewhere you have never been
- Try new forms of exercise like bike riding or water aerobics
- Begin to think of yourself as an active person





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