

**HEALTHY STEPS\* WEIGHT LOSS CENTER**  
MEDICAL CORPORATION

\* SURGICAL TREATMENT OF EXCESS POUNDS

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**WHAT TO EXPECT: STEADY STATE (BEYOND 18 MONTHS)  
FOLLOWING LAPAROSCOPIC ROUX-EN-Y GASTRIC BYPASS**

**Keys to Success**

While there are many factors which determine, for an individual patient, his or her likelihood of weight and nutritional stability in the long run after RNY gastric bypass, there are two primary keys to long term success. These habits have hopefully been developed by each patient in the first year after surgery: they help each patient lose weight initially, and will help keep the pounds off once a stable weight is reached.

These keys are:

1. **Don't graze!** Eat three healthy, high-protein meals daily, well-spaced to avoid hunger between meals, and avoid snacks – at most, one healthy snack (protein: cheese, jerky, yogurt) in the afternoon or evening. If your work or home environment is surrounded by snack-food that continually tempts you to graze, get rid of it!
2. **Exercise!** Keep up a life-long habit of regular exercise, 20 minutes or more of aerobic exercise at least three days a week – strenuous enough to make you sweat or get your heart-rate up.

Weight loss surgery is not a miracle cure, but it does allow the morbidly obese patient an opportunity to “set the clock back” – lose sufficient pounds to achieve a healthy weight, then maintain that weight. This is done by forcibly getting rid of old **unhealthy** habits in the first year (overeating, sweet eating) and, with motivation and work, reestablishing **healthy** habits that not only help maximize initial weight loss but, if continued, keep the weight off long term (exercising, avoiding snacks).

**Avoiding Long-term Problems**

1. **Malnutrition:** eat protein first at every meal, three meals per day; take your daily multivitamin (ensuring it has 100% adult RDA of iron, B1, B12, folate), and calcium supplement; follow-up with your surgeon and dietitian every six months (including bloodwork).
  2. **Gastric Pouch Ulcers:** avoid smoking, alcoholic beverages, and nonsteroidal medications (ibuprofen, naprosyn, aspirin, and the like); if regular use of nonsteroidal medicine is required for medical reasons, contact your bariatric surgeon to ensure the gastric pouch is adequately protected to prevent ulcers.
  3. **Bowel Obstruction:** any abdominal surgery can result in scar tissue and internal hernia that can lead to “kinking” and obstruction of the intestine. Gastric bypass, because of the complexity of the operation, has a higher rate of this (perhaps 1 – 2% over a lifetime). There is nothing you as a patient can do to
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prevent this complication. However, you do need to know what to watch for: any unexplained, severe abdominal pain, lasting longer than an hour, especially if accompanied by extensive vomiting or retching, should prompt an urgent visit to the emergency room. Early attention by your surgeon for bowel obstruction can lead to effective treatment and a quick recovery. If left untreated, bowel obstruction can lead to the dangerous complication of gangrene.

- 4. Gallbladder attacks:** rapid weight loss of any type can lead to gallstones, and gastric bypass patients who still own a gallbladder are asked to take medication for six months after surgery to prevent gallstones. This is not 100% effective, however. Gallstone attacks are characterized by pain after eating, usually an hour or two after a full meal, located in the upper abdomen or upper right flank, accompanied by nausea and vomiting, perhaps fever or jaundice, and usually subsides on its own within an hour or two. Pain lasting longer than two hours should prompt an emergency room visit. Otherwise, report the attack to your surgeon.

It's important to continue your regular surgeon and dietitian check-up visits and bloodwork every six months, indefinitely. Studies have shown that gastric bypass patients who continue regular follow-up are more likely to keep their weight loss stable, and less likely to develop long-term problems. We also recommend regular attendance at your WLS Support Group, which also provides an incentive for continued motivation in keeping with healthy habits.