

Post-Surgical Lifestyle Requirements for Weight Loss Surgery Patients

The “Six Rules”

These lifestyle requirements are extremely important for losing weight and keeping the weight off. They focus on:

- The way you eat and drink
- How much exercise you get, and
- The amount of nutrients you receive through vitamin and mineral supplements

Rule #1: Eat Protein First

At every meal, eat the protein portion first. Fruit and vegetables come second, followed by starch (potato, rice, pasta, cereal, bread, etc.), if you still have room.

Eat one to three meals a day. One to two meals a day seem to agree well with most of our patients. The body does not need three meals a day, so listen to your hunger cues – rather than watch the clock.

Rule #2: Drink Water

Drink plenty of water (a minimum of 48 to 64 ounces every day). Your surgeon recognizes that soon after surgery you may only be able to tolerate a mouthful at a time – that is normal. Eventually, the amount will increase to as much as 2 to 4 ounces at a time.

Do not use coffee, tea, soda or juice as a substitute for water. You may have other fluids – in addition to water – but not in between meals. Flavorful liquids between meals encourage snacking.

Rule #3: Exercise

Ultimately, the goal is to exercise for at least 30 minutes every day. However, immediately after surgery, some patients may struggle with simply walking down the hall – their energy level is at an all-time low. The solution is to start out slowly and move your body a little more every day.

While every body is different, most patients feel back to normal in four to eight weeks. At this point, you can begin exercising on a treadmill at home or go to the gym, dance class, water aerobics class – or whatever you choose.

Be sure to consult your physician before beginning weight training.

Rule #4: Don't Snack

Anything eaten between meals that is flavorful or has calories is considered a snack.

When one snacks, glucose (sugar) goes to the brain. The brain, which lives off glucose and oxygen, remembers how good that shot of glucose felt. When the glucose is gone (about one to three hours later), the brain sends a message to snack again. As a result, snacking makes us feel hungrier – and it can slow down or actually stop weight loss. Snacking can also cause weight gain, depending on how much and how often we snack.

While the surgeon can alter your digestive system, you control your eating habits. To lose weight, make a commitment today to stop snacking.

Rule #5: Take Vitamins as Directed

Because you are eating only small meals and losing weight rapidly, your body cannot receive all the vitamins and minerals it requires. So you will need to take vitamin supplements daily. It's especially important for gastric bypass patients, who have additional malabsorption issues.

Because your daily vitamin requirements are greater than those who've not had weight loss surgery, you may not easily find the right vitamin products for you on the store shelf. To make sure you get adequate nutrients, our program dietician will give you detailed information on the amount and type of vitamin products you should take – and where to buy them.

After surgery (and later as symptoms warrant), your surgeon will test you for vitamin and mineral deficiencies to help ensure that you have proper nutrition.

Rule #6: No Smoking!!!

If you don't smoke don't start. If you smoke...quit and never start again. You will be required to have a nicotine level test run prior to surgery. If it comes back positive, your surgery will be cancelled, you will need to quit smoking, and your surgery can be rescheduled for a future date. Smoking increases the chance for respiratory complications during the procedure and can significantly increase your chance of developing gastric ulcers.

If your surgery was performed at AtlantiCare, follow the dietary and exercise guidelines provided by your medical team. Do not use any other follow-up care program – either off the Internet or from another healthcare provider.