

Information for people considering privately funded bariatric surgery

This leaflet provides you with important information if you are considering self-funding bariatric surgery to help with weight loss.

What is bariatric surgery?

Bariatric surgery is a treatment option for people who are severely overweight. In the UK, the three most common types of surgery are:

1. A gastric band
2. A sleeve gastrectomy
3. A gastric bypass

Bariatric surgery is available on the NHS; however, some people choose to have the surgery privately, either in the UK or overseas by self-funding the procedure.

The British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society recommend that you have a consultation with a UK surgeon first, which you may need to self-fund, to discuss whether surgery is appropriate, and which option will be best for you.

To help guide you towards choosing the right private service, the information below outlines what care should be provided as a minimum.

Before your surgery

Assessments

The service should undertake several assessments before you have your bariatric surgery. These assessments include:

- A review of your diet history to identify nutrition related problems.
- A physical examination.
- Blood tests to look at nutritional deficiencies, diabetes, cholesterol, and your kidney function. If your blood test results identify issues, these will need to be dealt with before you have surgery.

These assessments should be undertaken by expert healthcare professionals in bariatric care.

Nutritional supplements

Your chosen service may also advise you follow a low calorie / low carbohydrate diet before your surgery to reduce the size of your liver. Low calorie / low carbohydrate diets may not provide all the nutrients you need so you may need to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement. Your chosen service should advise whether you need to take a nutritional supplement, the type of supplement to take and the amount.

You should buy any recommended vitamin and mineral supplements yourself.

Mental and emotional support

Mental and emotional support (also known as psychological support) is usually needed by people before and after surgery. This support may be provided as part of a group or on a one-to-one basis.

Your chosen service should talk about this support and discuss what will work best for you.

After your surgery

People who have bariatric surgery should have follow up care for the rest of their life to ensure their nutritional needs are being met. If your follow up care is poor there is a potential serious risk of not being nourished enough.

NHS funded bariatric surgery follow up care is not provided for the first two years if you chose to self-fund your surgery. To be entitled to NHS funded bariatric surgery follow up care you must have completed an NHS Specialist Weight Management Programme and met their requirements for referral for bariatric surgery.

For the first two years after surgery

For the first two years after surgery your follow up care should be provided by the private service who has performed your surgery. In some cases, this follow up may only be an email or telephone call. If you are considering private surgery, please think about how this type of follow up will support you if you experience complications.

Your follow up should include monitoring of your nutritional needs. For this you will need blood tests, and it is your responsibility to arrange and pay for these blood tests privately and to check you are on the correct supplements.

Two years after your surgery

After the first two years your nutrition needs will still need to be reviewed at least once a year. This review may be undertaken by your GP, a discharge letter from your private bariatric service will help with this. Please ask the service to provide this for you.

Summary

The above care both before and after your bariatric surgery should be provided by your chosen service as a minimum. If they do not offer this, please reconsider who you choose to provide your surgery.

You should also be made aware that you can expect excess skin after your bariatric surgery. Removal of this is not routinely funded on the NHS, unless you are experiencing significant, recurrent medical issues.

Useful resources

Further useful information can be found at the British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society via www.bomss.org.