

## DON'T DRINK YOUR CALORIES

After the first 6-8 months of recovery, essentially all the calories you consume should be solid. Focus on drinking 40-64 ounces of water a day, and avoid carbonated beverages, juices, alcohol and caffeine. Protein shakes are also a significant source of calories, and should be avoided at this stage unless your meal plan accounts for them. (Most commonly, they are used from time to time as supplements between meals due to the fact that they will not keep you full for very long.)

We understand that you still have to enjoy life: one soda or beer at dinner won't derail your success, but you should be extremely mindful of your intake. Your intestinal tract doesn't know the difference between apple juice and a Starbucks® Frappuccino – at the end of the day, it's all sugar. If you would like to try a new drink from the grocery store, check the label first: if it is non-carbonated and has zero grams of carbohydrates, it is a good choice.

**Note: alcohol consumption after bariatric surgery may be dangerous to your health, please discuss the potential risks with your care team, and read the "Vice Advice and Medication Safety" guide.**

## EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE

Very few people like to exercise – it's hard, it isn't always fun and motivation can be difficult to come by. Not to mention it's *so easy* to fall into the age-old traps of "there's always tomorrow" or "I'll work twice as hard at my next workout." Throw all of those excuses out the window right now.

The discipline of daily exercise is one of the single most important aspects of success. Of the most successful weight loss surgery patients, 90% of them exercise for 30-60 minutes a day, five or more days a week. This is a long-term lifestyle change, and it is one of the most effective ways to ensure your success and continued health – now *and* well into the future.

### Creating an Exercise Plan

Your exercise routine will change as your recovery and weight loss progresses. As you advance, your routine should include three basic types of exercise: cardio, strength training and flexibility training.

#### Cardio

When you think of exercise, aerobic exercise – or cardio – is likely what comes to mind. These types of exercises focus on raising your heart rate and burning calories. Walking, biking, swimming, hiking, jogging, dancing and even household chores, like mowing the lawn or cleaning the house, can be great ways to incorporate cardiovascular exercise into your routine. Before and immediately following surgery, walking will be important.

#### Strength Training

While burning fat is the primary focus of exercise before weight loss surgery, maintaining your body's muscle mass becomes an increasingly important factor after weight loss surgery. To preserve and build muscle mass, focus on meeting your body's protein needs and incorporating strength training into your exercise regimen.

Strength training can include the use of equipment – like lifting weights or using resistance bands and machinery – or you can use your own body weight. For example, squats, lunges, push-ups and planks are a few great ways to build muscle, even if you don't have access to a gym or equipment.

#### Flexibility Training

Stretching should at least be a part of every workout, but it can be done more often. Flexibility helps prevent injuries, reduce joint and back pain and can improve balance. Muscles should be warm before beginning to stretch. Some type of low intensity exercise, like walking or marching in place, can help increase circulation and warm the muscles. When you stretch, use smooth, non-bouncing motions.

**Speak with your healthcare team before beginning an exercise regimen – especially after surgery. Failing to comply with the post-operative restrictions set forth by your team may result in delayed or complicated healing.**

For additional assistance in your exercise journey, speak with your healthcare team about referral to Fairfield Medical Center's Outpatient Therapy Services.



## Your Guide to Habits that Ensure Success



Fairfield  
Medical Center

This guide has been prepared to assist you and your family with understanding how to best set yourself up for success following bariatric surgery.

## WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY AS A TOOL

Anyone familiar with bariatric surgery will tell you this: weight loss surgery is not a cure, it's a tool. And like any tool, it won't work unless you use it correctly.

No matter how well the surgery goes, you will not be successful if you don't change your lifestyle – and these new habits won't "just happen" once surgery is completed. You'll have to be committed to making good choices day in and day out in order to create the long-lasting transformation you're hoping to achieve, and there's no better time to start than right now.

In fact, the first 12-18 months are critical in the weight loss process: minimal weight loss or significant weight regain in this time period could spell disaster for long-term success. As scary as that sounds, there's good news: avoiding it is simple. With a little dedication and discipline, you're unstoppable.

In this guide, you'll find detailed descriptions of seven habits that all successful patients have adopted.

## PRACTICING PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

1) Throw out all excuses, and 2) be totally honest with yourself: these are two of the most important steps in practicing personal accountability. When you have been battling something for a long time, it's easy to feel defeated. It's easy to feel like a victim, or like the world is working against you – we understand, but that ends now. You are in charge of your future.

If you do not take complete responsibility for your choices, you will never reach your full potential. You – and only you – are responsible for what you eat, how much you eat and when you eat it. Again and again and again, you'll have to make a decision: do you give into temptation or stay on track?

When Millie Pritchard, who had bariatric surgery in 2017, is faced with the choice, she has a trick up her sleeve: "I have to remind myself that I like the way this feels more than I like the way that tastes."

Decide right now that you are going to be successful. Visualize your goals becoming a reality and make a plan to get there.

These tips may help:

- **Examine your goals**
  - Take a look at where you are now and determine what you want to accomplish with bariatric surgery.
    - How much weight do you want to lose?
    - What do you want to be able to do that you can't do right now?
    - What dreams do you have that your weight has kept you from pursuing?
    - Where do you want to be in one year? How about in 5-10 years?
  - Some of these things may seem unattainable, but once you start this process, you are one step closer every. single. day.

## PRACTICING PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Write your goals down**
  - Get a journal, grab a pen and write down your goals in black and white.
    - This sounds simple, but it can be scary: it solidifies your commitment, and there's no turning back.
  - Be as specific as possible.
    - What health issues do you want to resolve?
      - » Instead of "I want to be healthy," write, "I want my blood pressure to be normal without using medication."
    - How much weight do you want to lose in what amount of time?
      - » Instead of "I want to lose weight," write, "I want to lose 100 lbs. in six months."
    - What specific activities do you want to be able to enjoy?
      - » Instead of "I want to be more active," write, "I want to be able to help my son train for soccer."
  - When you're identifying and writing down your goals, it may be easier to break them into categories, such as medical, professional, relational and spiritual.
- **Map out your plan to success – and track your progress**
  - Tracking your progress is a huge step in holding yourself accountable. We recommend keeping three logs:
    - Keep a food log
      - » The simple act of writing down *everything* you eat can help keep you on track. It not only helps you realize how much you've eaten, but the fact that there will be proof of any slip-up helps motivate you to avoid the candy bar or potato chips that might be calling your name.
    - Keep an exercise log
      - » Eventually, you should be exercising for approximately one hour, 4-7 days a week. It may seem impossible right now, but you'll get there. Start with working out two days a week, then three days a week, then five, etc.
      - » The bottom line: make a plan, write it down and hold yourself to it.
    - Keep a weight log
      - » Weigh yourself once a week and write it down.
      - » We recommend weighing yourself at the same time of day and on the same scale each week.  
*Do not weigh yourself daily or get hung up on the small, natural fluctuations.*
      - » Knowing what you weigh is a huge step towards staying on track and keeping those numbers under control.

## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Your stomach will be completely changed by bariatric surgery; instead of the stomach you once knew, you'll have a "pouch" or "sleeve." This stomach doesn't function like your original one did, so you'll have to be mindful about how you feed it.

You'll also have to learn how to *listen* to it.

"*Restriction*" is part of the reason that weight loss surgery is so effective; most simply, you will feel full after consuming only a small amount of food. This will be most noticeable immediately after surgery: you will only be able to eat a few ounces before feeling full. Within a year's time, you will be able to eat 3/4-1 cup of food at a time.

You will need to learn what "full" feels like in order to know when to stop eating.

Because you have such limited space in your new stomach, you need to make really smart choices: the goal is for you to satisfy your hunger long enough to keep you from being hungry before your next meal. This is called *satiety*.

If you don't achieve post-meal satiety, it will lead to snacking and grazing: this is a recipe for disaster. You will never feel hungry, but you will also never feel full – that's a problem.

## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY (CONT.)

There are three principles for achieving and maintaining satiety:

- Your pouch needs to be filled with *adequate* wall distention – or *stretch* – after each meal.
  - You will not achieve this with snacking, so don't do it!
- Your pouch will need to *empty slowly*.
  - You will need to eat **solid foods**, and you need to **avoid drinking liquids** for 15 minutes before meals and 1-2 hours after meals. **This may be one of the most important lifestyle changes after surgery.**
- You will need to eat *several deliberate meals a day*.
  - Do not skip breakfast! Nearly 80% of successful patients eat breakfast every day.
  - Most patients eat about five times a day: three balanced meals and a couple of *mindful* snacks.
    - » Each day, you should have three servings of protein, three servings of vegetables, one serving of fruit and two servings of carbohydrates in the form of bread or starches, like whole grain bread or potatoes.
      - \* This meal plan only applies when your pouch can accommodate larger portion sizes, around 6-12 months.

## EAT PROTEIN FIRST, ALWAYS

Protein is the foundation of your diet. It takes longer to digest (meaning you will feel more full for a longer period of time), it decreases dumping (an uncomfortable side effect from eating foods that are too rich or unhealthy) and it is the only macronutrient that your body can't make on its own.

Whenever your pouch is full, at least 1/3 of those calories should be from protein.

A good goal is to eat 3-4 ounces per meal, or 20-25 grams, three times a day.

## BUDGET YOUR CARBS

Carbs are an important part of a balanced diet, but too much at one time will cause unwanted side effects and curb your success. If your diet contains too many carbohydrates, you may experience dumping, increased fat storage and you'll be left feeling hungry between meals.

A good guideline is to eat 20-30 grams per meal, three times a day. This equates to one non-starchy vegetable (I.E. cauliflower), and one serving of a starchy vegetable (I.E. corn) or grain with each meal.

## LIMIT YOUR FATS – EVEN THE HEALTHY ONES

Like protein and carbs, fats are essential to your diet. They are also digested at a slower rate, and will help you to feel full between meals. Fats, however, have more calories per gram than either of their counterparts, so be sure to limit your serving sizes. (One gram of fat has approximately 9 calories, while one gram of protein has approximately 4 calories.)

A good guideline is to eat 10-15 grams per meal. This is equal to one pat of butter or one tablespoon of cooking oil – it's easy to see how a little goes a long way!

You should also try to consume "heart healthy" (monounsaturated or polyunsaturated) fats; avoid trans fats whenever possible. Keep in mind that "heart healthy" doesn't mean you can eat an unlimited amount: any extra fat that is consumed will go straight to "storage."

For more detailed information on protein, carbohydrates and fats, see the "Understanding Macronutrients" guide.