

Optimizing Nutrition After Bariatric Surgery

Nicholas Wray
Adelaide Circle of Care
Flinders Private Hospital
South Australia
Australia

Bariatric surgery is an extremely effective weight loss tool which can result in significant and sustained weight loss. Implementing a structured post-surgical dietary protocol and managing the nutritional deficiencies that can result from such surgery, are essential to any bariatric surgical practice.

There are 4 critical stages after bariatric surgery where dietary manipulation and intervention are essential for weight loss success.

1. Post-surgical healing phase (liquid diet) - enables healing to occur from the surgery and minimizes patient discomfort whilst lessening the risk of stretching the new stomach pouch.
2. Progression of diet back to solids - semi-solid meals are introduced then gradual progression back to solid diet. The soft texture diet enables the stomach to get used to foods again, and the patient begins the learning process of how much they can safely eat.
3. Normal diet - dietary intervention during the longer time period from post-surgical period right through to target weight. Dietary guidance and regular contact with the patient is essential to continue a steady but adequate rate of weight loss and minimize nutritional deficiencies.
4. Maintenance of target weight - ongoing dietary review to ensure weight lost is maintained.

An experienced bariatric dietitian is a critical team member in each of these stages. The nutritional consequences of bariatric surgery must be considered on an individual basis, as both macronutrient and micronutrient deficiencies can occur. Deficiencies must be screened for and appropriate supplementation provided.