“The Trouble with Fat” or Why Being Overweight Leads to Surgery Complications

Why Being Overweight Leads to Surgery Complications

- In recent years, our surgical literature has shown that one who is overweight, with a BMI of 30 or greater, has a great \textbf{INCREASE IN RISK} of having major \textbf{COMPLICATIONS} after any surgery. At a normal weight, under BMI 30, the risks of surgery can occur some 5-7\% of the time. With BMI over 30, being overweight, your risks rapidly rise to over 65\%. This means the risks of surgery outweigh the benefits of the surgery, and it is YOU, who will suffer the complications. It is clear to us, then, that operating on you, when your weight is high and BMI is over 30, is not good for you, and that we should not take you to surgery until your weight is down, under BMI 30.

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<th>BMI &lt; 30</th>
<th>Surgical risks of</th>
<th>5 to 7%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMI &gt; 30</td>
<td>Surgical risks of</td>
<td>65%</td>
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- As we gain weight, our basic metabolism changes. Our hearts have to work harder to push blood to our skin and organs, so our \textbf{blood pressure} increases with this increased work of our hearts. The fat we put down under the skin or in our belly changes the way our pancreas has to work harder to process the sugar and carbohydrates we consume, and the sugar we process in the liver to use in our brains. So, Diabetes often results. With diabetes you can develop abnormal white blood cell function, and then a major risk of \textbf{wound infection} and those surgical cuts will not heal. With weight loss, diabetes and high blood pressure will improve or even “disappear.” Some patients are able to stop most or all medications for these diseases when they reach a normal weight.

- The fat under the thin skin gets thicker, and the overlying skin has inadequate blood supply to get into the thicker fat layer. \textbf{Infection} is more likely. Inside the belly, you also put down thick layers of fat on the loops of intestine. When you lie down, this heavy fat presses on the large vein (vena cava), which slows blood draining from the legs, so \textbf{blood clots} can form easily in the leg or pelvis veins, and clots can break off and travel to the lungs, as a possibly fatal \textbf{Pulmonary Embolus}.

- The fat on the intestines also pushes up against the lungs and leads to poor breathing and \textbf{Pneumonia} after surgery. With any cough, there is more pressure against the muscle repair and skin cut, leading to separation of the wound, and \textbf{dehiscence} or \textbf{major hernia} of intestines out of the belly. As you lose to a normal weight, this extra fat dissolves, and many of the problems mentioned are eliminated.

**SO, FOR YOUR HEALTH, LOSE WEIGHT TO A BMI OF 30, AND THEN SEE US.**

**WE CAN THEN CONSIDER IF YOU ARE A CANDIDATE... FOR A LESS RISKY, MORE SUCCESSFUL SURGERY!**

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.