

## Weight issues in Plastic Surgery

Weight issues are very important in the practice of Plastic Surgery as an estimated 60% of Americans are overweight. Within reason, most Plastic Surgeons don't specify a weight for you however if you know you are unhappy with your current weight, it is our recommendation you invest the time and effort to get as close to your ideal weight **before** you have surgery. The real question is- if I have my surgery now and then lose weight- how will I look? That is a difficult question as we all gain and lose weight in different areas as determined by our genetics. Some surgeries are definitely be affected by weight loss and others are minimally changed by weight loss.

A patient's weight is the result of several factors which include: **Calorie intake**-(how much you eat), **Exercise**- (how much you burn), **Genetics**, **Intestinal absorption**, & **metabolism**. Of these factors only diet & exercise are "easily" controllable. Your metabolic rate can be controllable with some medications but only temporarily and with a moderate amount of risk. Intestinal absorption is being studied for possible manipulation but no great answers have been developed yet. There are very interesting stomach/brain hormones being studied that may be useful in the future.

In this light, weight becomes a function of two main factors- 1) - how much and what we eat and 2) - how much we exercise. You certainly can have bariatric surgery to force you to eat less if you cannot do this on your own- but you will eat less. This certainly is an option if you just can't control your intake.

Plastic Surgery will not cause you to lose weight long term. Plastic Surgery will cause a temporary weight reduction however patients must maintain this weight loss after surgery. This means weighing becomes more important after surgery.

As people age, our metabolism and activity generally decrease and it becomes harder to keep weight off. This means we need less food as we age. This tendency must be controlled for prolonged beneficial effects from body contouring, liposuction, and in weight maintenance.

**Timing of surgery**- for the best results lose as much of the excess weight as possible before surgery.

**Diets**- this must be viewed as a change in lifestyle and not a quick fix. Here the clear science is that carbohydrates are what make most of us fat. Most patients do very well on a carbohydrate restricted diet. The Atkin's diet, The Zone, Body for Life, South Beach Diet, and Weight Watcher's all work well. The important thing is find one you will do and do it.

**Exercise**- what you need most for weight loss is aerobic exercise. Walking, cycling, jogging, elliptical trainers, swimming, and spin classes all are good and should be combined with carbohydrate/calorie reduction to insure success. As age we all need some weight training for bone and muscle preservation however if weight loss is the goal, then aerobics is where you need to concentrate. Find exercises that you will do and mix it up every week.

**David E Martin MD**