



# Your guide to bariatric surgery

Aetna Institutes of Quality<sup>®</sup> Bariatric Surgery Facilities

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# You're seriously thinking about weight loss surgery.

You know the risks of morbid obesity. You've discussed them with your doctor. It's a chronic disease that can result in related illnesses, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

With your doctor's guidance, you may have tried several approaches to losing weight. None have worked. You both agree that bariatric, or weight loss, surgery might be the right treatment.

This guide for adults 18 and over was created to help you prepare for and recover from bariatric surgery, so you can get back to living your life.

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# Making an informed decision.

Bariatric surgery is not a quick fix or a cure. It is the first step on a lifelong path toward a healthier lifestyle. And it can lead to a healthier you. Therefore, it's important to understand the surgery, the risks and the lifestyle changes.

**Do your homework.** Hospitals or surgeons often have classes to explain the types of surgery. Attending one helps you understand the risks and benefits.

**Ask questions.** It's your right to ask questions so you understand the surgery.

<i>What type of surgery will be used? What are the risks?</i>	<i>What will the surgery cost?</i>	<i>How much weight might I lose? How quickly?</i>	<i>How long should I plan to be off work?</i>	<i>How long will I be in the hospital?</i>
<i>What kind of ongoing doctor appointments will I need?</i>	<i>How many weight loss surgeries has my doctor done?</i>	<i>What kinds of lifestyle changes and dietary changes will I need to make?</i>	<i>What are the follow-up procedures and care that I may need?</i>	

**Count on Aetna Navigator®.** Your member website is also a great resource. It's at [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com). When you log in, click on "Thinking of Surgery" to learn more about working with your doctor, understanding treatment options, making confident choices and navigating the surgery process to a better result.



## Get the quality you deserve.

**Seek facilities known for quality care.** As an Aetna member, you have a special network of hospitals and other facilities that specialize in certain weight loss procedures. We call these facilities our **Institutes of Quality (IOQ)** for short).

Facilities earn IOQ status for showing a high level of quality but also for efficiency in bariatric procedures. We measure many factors, like the level of care patients receive, how often patients return to the hospital after surgery and more.

Visit our online **DocFind**<sup>®</sup> provider directory at [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com) to find IOQ Bariatric Surgery Facilities and specialists who have privileges at these hospitals.\*

\*Review your plan documents to find out if you are required to use an IOQ facility.

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## Going ahead with surgery.

Once you've decided to proceed, there are steps you must take in order to use your coverage more effectively. They can also lead to more positive outcomes.

**Check your plan documents.** See if your health insurance or health benefits plan covers bariatric surgery. If you have coverage, check if you meet Aetna's clinical criteria for bariatric surgery by reviewing the clinical policy bulletin for Obesity Surgery (CPB 157). Also, understand the costs you are responsible for based on your benefits, and learn if the hospital and surgeon you choose will affect your coverage.

**Get evaluations.** You might be required to get several evaluations:

*Medical*

*Nutritional  
and  
dietary*

*Behavioral  
health*

**Complete paperwork.** Work with your surgeon and the office staff to get prior approval from your health insurance company before you have the surgery. Make sure all required paperwork is completed. This ensures that you can use your plan coverage efficiently.

Depending on your plan, an Aetna nurse may call you before or after your procedure if it requires admission to the hospital.



**Ask questions along the way.** If you are unsure of what your plan covers or have other questions about your upcoming surgery, you can reach out to Aetna for information and support by:

- Having a chat with **Ask Ann**, your virtual assistant, located in Aetna Navigator
- Calling the number on the back of your Aetna ID card

**Take care of health needs.** Ask your surgeon:

- For educational materials to help you quit smoking if you are a smoker. You can also check the **Health Programs** page on the Aetna Navigator website to see the health and wellness programs available to you as an Aetna member.
- For advice on taking your current medications.

**Plan for the future.** Diet, exercise and lifestyle changes are important for your best outcomes. Talk with your doctor, nutritionist or dietician about these changes.

**Get work and home life in order.**

- Check with your doctor on physical limitations after surgery.
- Ask family and friends for help with driving and chores.
- Schedule time off work with your employer.
- Make sure you have the phone numbers of family, friends and pharmacy in your cell phone or on a list.



# Preparing to leave the hospital.

Before you head home, get the information you need to take care of yourself.

**Know your discharge plan.** This is a list of instructions. It includes activity limits, diet and vitamin supplements, pain control, exercise, and doctor appointments or lab tests.

**Learn the warning signs.** Make sure you understand how to spot problems that will require a call to a doctor. Leave the hospital with a list of surgery team names and phone numbers so you can ask questions from home.

**Understand your prescription drugs.** Get written prescriptions in hand before leaving the hospital. Or confirm they were called in to your pharmacy. If you are an Aetna Pharmacy member, you can check the price of your prescriptions on your Aetna Navigator.

## Ask questions:

*What is each drug for?*

*How and when do I take each drug?*

*What are possible side effects?*

*Should I avoid taking other drugs or foods with these prescriptions?*

**Manage chronic conditions.** Ask if you need to change anything about blood sugar monitoring, sleep apnea machines, or drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol during your recovery.



## Returning home to a new routine.

**Keep information handy.** Put your discharge instructions and doctor and pharmacy phone numbers in a place that's easy to find. If you do not understand the instructions, call your doctor.

**Use your prescriptions.** Make sure to fill your prescriptions for drugs and supplies ordered by the doctor. For supplies and equipment, go to a home health store or pharmacy. Be sure to check DocFind on Aetna Navigator to locate the Aetna in-network pharmacies and other facilities in your area.

**Drink liquids.** Water is best. Your surgical team probably explained how to take sips, drink small quantities at a time, drink liquids between meals, avoid straws and carbonated beverages (to avoid swallowing air and bloating).

**Follow the diet.** Eat as instructed by your doctor, dietician or nutritionist. Know the types and amounts of foods to eat and which foods to avoid. Be ready to puree food or use other special techniques if needed. And be sure you take daily vitamins and supplements as advised by your doctor.

**Follow the doctor's orders.** Limit activity when you first get home. Know when you are allowed to drive, return to work and start normal activities. Begin to increase activity levels with regular exercise. Avoid or stop smoking. And continue to take regular deep breaths to keep lungs expanded and healthy.

**Attend a support group.** You may find it helpful to share your experience with others who have had the surgery. Your doctor, a local hospital or the Internet can help you find a support group.

**Schedule appointments.** Call to make follow-up visits and appointments for lab tests with your surgeon or other health care providers.





## Get back to being a healthier you.

- ▼ Log in to **Aetna Navigator**, your secure member website, at **[www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com)**
- ▼ Click Find a Doctor, Pharmacy or Facility to access the **DocFind®** provider directory

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