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Bariatric Surgery

Weight Loss Surgery: Can It Really Help Manage Type 2 Diabetes?



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, diabetes has reached epidemic proportions in the United States affecting more than 3 million people over the last two years.

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States as well, and more than 80% of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. There is such a close parallel between these two epidemics that some researchers are referring to them as the *twin epidemics*.

Obesity causes insulin resistance and is therefore a major risk factor for type 2 diabetes. In type 2 diabetes the body either does not make enough insulin (which is called insulin deficiency), or the cells in the muscles, liver, and fat do not use insulin properly (which is known as insulin resistance).

Insulin is often thought of as the key that unlocks the doors of the cells in the body, allowing glucose to enter the cell, where it can be used for energy. In insulin resistance, the body may be producing enough insulin, but it is unable to use the insulin properly. The result is glucose levels remain higher than normal. Research shows that the greater the degree of obesity, the greater the degree of insulin resistance, high blood pressure and high triglyceride levels. This can ultimately lead to stroke and heart disease. Uncontrolled diabetes can wreak havoc on the body as well, causing kidney disease, eye disease, nerve damage as well as stroke and heart disease.

It is well known that modest weight loss (10 - 15 pounds), in overweight individuals, can improve the body's response to insulin. Additionally, weight loss can help control blood glucose levels and the other problems associated with diabetes. Moreover, recent research has demonstrated that surgical weight loss in obese individuals not only remarkably improves blood glucose levels but, can cause a remission of type 2 diabetes - leading some to suggest weight loss surgery is a cure. Results of these studies indicate that the type of weight loss surgery and the length of time since diagnosis were factors affecting the outcomes. Remission of diabetes was more prevalent with gastric bypass than gastric banding and in individuals with a shorter duration of diabetes.

At this time more research is needed to better understand the exact mechanism for the remission but, it is clear that weight loss surgery can be beneficial in the management of type 2

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