

A Change for the Better

Eisenhower Bariatric Center



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Bariatric surgery refers to a variety of surgical procedures that are performed to treat serious, health-threatening obesity. When an individual is morbidly obese, the accumulation of fatty tissue in the body can interfere with and injure the body's organs. Obese individuals are at high risk for Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, impaired immune response, orthopedic conditions and seriously impaired mobility. Obese individuals also frequently suffer from sleep disorders such as sleep apnea.

For people who are extremely obese, it can be very difficult to lose weight through diet and exercise alone. In such cases, bariatric surgery has been shown to be extremely effective. Last year, Eisenhower Medical Center introduced its new Bariatric Center to the Coachella Valley. The Center is directed by Board Certified Surgeon Bobby Bhasker-Rao, MD, FACS.

The Eisenhower Bariatric Center offers two surgeries: gastric lap banding, which limits food intake by using an adjustable band to decrease the size of the stomach, and Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, which bypasses a small portion of the digestive tract. Both are performed laparoscopically.

According to Bariatric Program Coordinator Elaine Prescott, RN, MSN, both procedures are effective in helping patients lose weight. She says which is best comes down to personal choice, based on a patient's consultation with his or her physician.

"The lap band restricts how much food you can take in at one time," Prescott says. "The Roux-en-Y procedure is more restrictive, because it actually prevents you from eating certain foods."

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—Rocky Moore

Prescott herself had the lap band procedure soon after the Bariatric Center opened in 2008.

"I have lost more than 46 pounds, just three months after surgery," Prescott says. "I chose the lap band procedure because I didn't need to restrict the kinds of foods that I ate. For instance, I am not a big sweets eater. I needed to reduce the quantity of food I ate to successfully lose weight and keep it off, so the lap band met my needs."

Prescott works with patients to develop nutrition and exercise programs that help them adapt to the changes to their digestive systems, and to ensure that they keep the weight off. She says it is important to remember that surgery is only the first step...losing weight and maintaining the loss also requires lifestyle changes.

For Rocky Moore, a 56-year-old businessman from Twentynine Palms, bariatric surgery was the push he needed. Last year, Moore weighed more 350 pounds. He suffered from sleep apnea, gout, high cholesterol and borderline diabetes. He had a cardiac stent and was taking nine different medications every day.

"I was extremely unhealthy," Moore says. "I had such severe back and knee pain that I couldn't exercise, and I could walk only a few steps before losing my breath. I attended Eisenhower's first seminar on bariatric surgery last year, and signed up immediately."

Moore had Roux-en-Y surgery in October 2008, and says it changed his life.

"I've lost 175 pounds," Moore says. "I run 10 miles every day. I have no more pain, and I've gotten rid of all my medications. My blood work is normal, my blood pressure is normal. I feel like I have a new lease on life."

Moore says the surgery jump-started his journey back to better health, and that the support groups Eisenhower provides help keep him on track, ensuring he remains committed to a healthy diet and daily exercise.

"I had great expectations, but I never believed I could come as far as I have. Having bariatric surgery at Eisenhower was the best decision I've ever made — I might not be alive today without it."

For more information about the Eisenhower Bariatric Center, please call 760-837-8490.

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