



Hong Kong Obesity Society
香港肥胖學會

Overcome Obesity

with Practical Steps



Edition 1.1

“Foreword”

It is my great pleasure to introduce this invaluable booklet on obesity, specifically tailored to the needs of the general public seeking guidance on how to effectively manage this prevalent health concern. This comprehensive resource aims to empower individuals by providing them with knowledge, strategies, and practical advice to navigate the complex landscape of obesity.

Obesity is a widespread issue that goes far beyond just physical appearance. It has significant implications for our overall health and well-being, affecting not only our bodies but also our minds and emotions. Managing obesity requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account the unique circumstances and challenges faced by each individual.

This booklet emphasizes the significance of adopting sustainable, long-term solutions rather than quick-fix approaches. It provides practical tips, meal plans, and exercise suggestions to help individuals make informed choices and establish healthy habits that can be integrated into their daily lives.

Furthermore, this resource recognizes the emotional and psychological aspects of obesity and offers guidance on developing a positive body image, managing emotional eating, and cultivating self-compassion throughout the weight management journey. It highlights the importance of seeking support from healthcare professionals, friends, and family, and provides resources for finding additional help when needed.

I encourage you, the reader, to approach this resource with an open mind and a willingness to embark on a journey of self-discovery and transformation. Remember, managing obesity is not an overnight process, but with determination, support, and the knowledge contained within these pages, you can take positive steps towards a healthier and more fulfilling life.

May this booklet be a beacon of hope and guidance, equipping you with the tools and understanding needed to overcome the challenges of obesity and embrace a future of improved health and well-being.

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Chapter 1: What is Obesity?

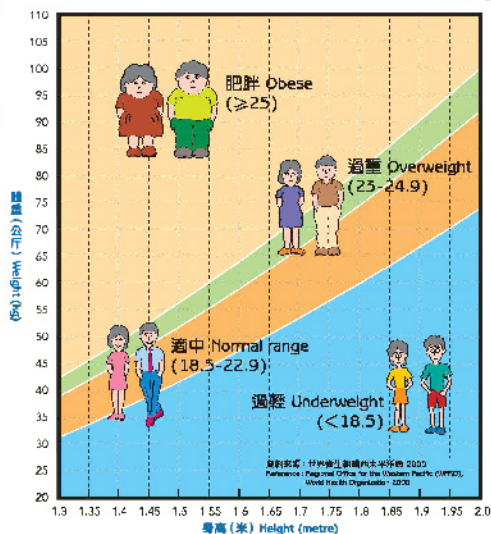


Obesity is a condition where a person has too much body fat, which can harm their health. It goes beyond being just overweight.¹ To understand obesity better, let's talk about body mass index (BMI), which is a way to measure if someone is obese.²

After measuring the body weight and height, you can calculate your BMI by using the below formula:³

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight(kg)}}{\text{Height(m)} \times \text{Height(m)}}$$

Based on the BMI value, you can tell whether you are underweight, normal, overweight or obese. Among the Asian population, BMI $\geq 25\text{kg/m}^2$ is defined as obese.²



Chapter 2: The Impact of Obesity on Your Health

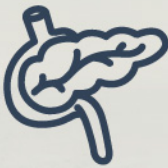


1 Cardiovascular Diseases and Hypertension



Obesity puts extra strain on your heart and blood vessels, increasing the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases. Conditions such as high blood pressure (hypertension), heart disease, stroke, and heart attacks are more common among individuals with obesity.^{2,9} The excess fat in the body can lead to the build-up of cholesterol and plaque in the arteries, restricting blood flow and increasing the risk of heart-related problems.⁹

2 Type 2 Diabetes and Insulin Resistance



Obesity is strongly linked to the development of type 2 diabetes. Excess body fat affects the way your body uses insulin, leading to insulin resistance.¹⁰ Insulin is a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar levels. When insulin resistance occurs, blood sugar levels can rise, potentially resulting in the development of type 2 diabetes.¹⁰ Managing weight and adopting a healthier lifestyle can improve insulin sensitivity and reduce the risk of diabetes.¹¹

3 Joint Problems and Musculoskeletal Disorders



Carrying excess weight puts strain on your joints, particularly in the knees, hips, and lower back. This can lead to joint pain, osteoarthritis, and other musculoskeletal disorders. Losing weight can help reduce the stress on your joints, alleviate pain, and improve mobility.¹²



4 Increased Risk of Certain Cancers



Obesity is associated with an increased risk of several types of cancer, including breast, colon, endometrial, kidney, and pancreatic cancers.¹³ The exact reasons for this link are not fully understood, but factors such as hormonal changes, chronic inflammation, and insulin resistance may contribute.^{13,14} Maintaining a healthy weight and adopting a balanced diet can help lower the risk of developing these cancers.

5 Sleep Apnea and Respiratory Issues



Obesity can lead to sleep apnea, a condition where a person's breathing is repeatedly interrupted during sleep. The excess fat around the neck can obstruct the airways, causing breathing difficulties and disrupted sleep patterns.¹⁵ Obesity is also associated with an increased risk of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and other respiratory problems.¹⁶

6 Psychological and Emotional Implications



Obesity can impact mental health and emotional well-being.¹⁷ Negative body image, low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety are commonly experienced by individuals with obesity.¹⁷ Social stigma and discrimination related to weight can further contribute to psychological distress.¹⁷ Addressing these psychological aspects is important for overall well-being and successful weight management.

Understanding the impact of obesity on your health is crucial for taking steps towards a healthier lifestyle.¹ By managing your weight and adopting healthy habits, you can reduce the risk of developing these health conditions and improve your overall well-being.

Chapter 3: Debunking the Myths



Myth 1: Obesity is solely a result of overeating and laziness.



Fact 1: Obesity is a multifactorial condition influenced by a combination of genetic, environmental, and behavioral factors.⁸ While diet and physical activity play a role, they are not the sole determinants of obesity.⁸ Genetic predisposition, hormonal factors, medication side effects, and socioeconomic factors also contribute.⁸



Myth 2: Weight loss is solely about appearance.



Fact 2: While weight loss can improve appearance, its significance goes beyond aesthetics. Managing obesity and achieving a healthy weight can have profound positive effects on overall health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.² It is about improving quality of life, enhancing mobility, reducing pain, and improving overall well-being.¹⁸



Myth 3: Obesity is a reflection of willpower or personal character.



Fact 3: Obesity is not a moral failing or a lack of willpower. It is a complex medical condition influenced by various factors, including genetics, metabolism, environment, and psychological factors.⁸ Shaming individuals with obesity only perpetuates stigma and hinders efforts to address the underlying causes.¹⁷



Chapter 3: Debunking the Myths



Myth 4: Only extreme weight loss measures are effective.



Fact 4: Sustainable weight management is not about drastic measures or quick fixes. It is about adopting healthy lifestyle habits that can be maintained long-term. Gradual weight loss, achieved through balanced eating, regular physical activity, and behavior modifications, is more sustainable and has long-lasting benefits.¹⁹



Myth 5: Once you lose weight, the battle is over.



Fact 5: Weight loss is an ongoing journey, and maintaining a healthy weight requires a long-term commitment. It is essential to adopt healthy habits, such as regular physical activity and mindful eating, for sustained weight management. Ongoing support, self-monitoring, and adapting to life's changes are crucial for maintaining progress.²⁰



Understanding and debunking these myths can help shift the focus from blame and shame to a compassionate and evidence-based approach to obesity management.

Remember, it is important to seek guidance from healthcare professionals who can provide personalized advice and support tailored to your specific needs and circumstances.



1 Balanced and Nutritious Eating



Eating a balanced and nutritious diet is crucial for managing weight. Focus on consuming a variety of whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats.²¹ Portion control is important, and mindful eating can help you develop a better relationship with food.²¹ Avoid restrictive diets or extreme measures, as they are often unsustainable and can lead to unhealthy behaviors.²²

2 Regular Physical Activity



Incorporating regular physical activity into your routine is essential for weight management. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week, along with strength training exercises.²³ Find activities that you enjoy, such as walking, swimming, dancing, or cycling. Stay consistent and gradually increase the intensity and duration of your workouts.

3 Behavior Modification Techniques



Changing behaviors and habits is an integral part of sustainable weight management. Set realistic goals, break them down into smaller achievable steps, and celebrate your progress along the way. Practice portion control, mindful eating, and develop strategies to manage emotional eating triggers. Keep a food and activity journal to monitor your progress and identify areas for improvement.

4 Seek Support and Accountability



Stress and emotional factors can influence eating behaviors and weight management. Develop healthy coping mechanisms for stress, such as engaging in relaxation techniques, practising mindfulness, or pursuing hobbies. Seek support from mental health professionals if needed to address underlying emotional challenges.

Chapter 4: Strategies for Healthy Weight Management



5 Stress Management and Emotional Well-being



Stress and emotional factors can influence eating behaviors and weight management.²⁴ Develop healthy coping mechanisms for stress, such as engaging in relaxation techniques, practising mindfulness, or pursuing hobbies.²⁵ Seek support from mental health professionals if needed to address underlying emotional challenges.

6 Sleep and Rest



Adequate sleep is important for weight management.²⁶ Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.²⁶ Lack of sleep can disrupt hormones related to appetite regulation, leading to increased cravings and a higher risk of weight gain.²⁶ Establish a consistent sleep routine and create a sleep-friendly environment to support healthy sleep habits.²⁶

7 Create a Supportive Environment



Set up your environment for success by making healthy choices easily accessible. Stock your kitchen with nutritious foods, plan meals in advance, and limit the availability of unhealthy snacks. Surround yourself with supportive individuals who encourage and motivate you on your weight management journey.



Remember, healthy weight management is a gradual process. Be patient with yourself, embrace small changes, and focus on long-term sustainability. Celebrate your successes and learn from setbacks.

By adopting these strategies and making lifestyle modifications, you can achieve and maintain a healthy weight while improving your overall health and well-being.



In this chapter, we will address common challenges that can arise during the weight management journey and provide strategies to overcome them. Staying motivated and resilient is key to achieving long-term success.

1 Dealing with Plateaus

Plateaus, where weight loss stalls despite your efforts, can be frustrating. Remember that plateaus are normal and temporary. To overcome them, reassess your eating and exercise habits. Adjust your calorie intake, vary your workouts, or try new activities to challenge your body. Stay consistent and patient, and the scale will eventually move again.

2 Managing Food Cravings

Food cravings can be a challenge, but they can be managed. Practice mindful eating by paying attention to hunger and fullness cues. Opt for healthier alternatives to satisfy cravings, such as choosing a piece of fruit instead of sugary snacks. Distract yourself with activities like going for a walk, engaging in a hobby, or talking to a friend to redirect your focus away from cravings.

3 Handling Emotional Eating

Emotional eating can derail weight management efforts.²⁴ Develop alternative coping mechanisms for dealing with emotions, such as engaging in physical activity, practising deep breathing or meditation, or journaling your thoughts and feelings.²⁵ Seek support from a therapist or counselor to address underlying emotional issues contributing to emotional eating.

4 Overcoming Social Challenges

Social situations can present challenges to healthy eating. Communicate your goals to friends and family, and seek their support. When dining out, choose healthier options, watch portion sizes, and practice mindful eating. Remember that it's okay to indulge occasionally, as long as it's part of an overall balanced approach.



5 Maintaining Motivation

Motivation can fluctuate throughout your weight management journey. Set realistic, measurable goals and track your progress to stay motivated. Celebrate your achievements, both big and small. Find a workout buddy or join a support group to stay motivated and accountable. Surround yourself with positive reminders of your goals, such as inspirational quotes or images.

6 Building Resilience

Building resilience is crucial for overcoming setbacks. Learn from mistakes and view them as opportunities for growth. Stay focused on the bigger picture of improving your health and well-being. Seek support from your social network, healthcare professionals, or online communities. Remember that setbacks are part of the journey, and each day is a chance to start fresh.

7 Celebrating Non-Scale Victories

Weight management is not solely about the number on the scale. Recognize and celebrate non-scale victories, such as increased energy levels, improved fitness, better sleep, or fitting into smaller clothing sizes. Acknowledge and appreciate the positive changes you experience beyond just weight loss.



By implementing these strategies and maintaining a positive mindset, you can overcome challenges, stay motivated, and continue progressing towards your weight management goals. Remember that consistency, perseverance, and self-compassion are key to long-term success.





1 What is a Weight Loss Plateau?

A weight loss plateau refers to a period during your weight management journey when your weight stops decreasing, despite maintaining your diet and exercise routine.²⁷ Plateaus are a common occurrence and can last for weeks or even months.²⁷ They happen because your body adapts to the changes you've made, and your metabolism may adjust to conserve energy.²⁷

2 Reasons for Plateaus

- 1 **Metabolic adaptation:** As you lose weight, your metabolism may slow down, requiring fewer calories to maintain your new weight.²⁷
- 2 **Muscle gain:** If you've incorporated strength training into your routine, you may be gaining muscle mass, which can offset fat loss on the scale.
- 3 **Inaccurate calorie tracking:** Over time, you may underestimate your calorie intake or overestimate your calorie expenditure, leading to a plateau.
- 4 **Lack of variety in workouts:** Your body may adapt to repetitive exercise routines, resulting in fewer calorie burns.





3 Breaking Through a Plateau



To overcome a weight loss plateau, consider the following strategies:

- 1 **Review your calorie intake:** Double-check your portion sizes and reassess your calorie tracking methods. Be mindful of hidden sources of extra calories.²⁸
- 2 **Adjust your calorie intake:** Gradually reduce your calorie intake by a small amount to create a calorie deficit. However, be cautious not to excessively restrict calories, as it may negatively impact your energy levels and overall well-being.²⁸
- 3 **Increase physical activity:** Incorporate new exercises or increase the intensity and duration of your workouts. This can help boost your metabolism and calorie burn.²⁸
- 4 **Prioritize strength training:** Building lean muscle mass can increase your metabolic rate and help you overcome plateaus. Include strength training exercises at least two to three times a week.^{28,29}
- 5 **Try interval training:** Incorporate high-intensity interval training (HIIT) or interval workouts into your routine. These can be effective for breaking through plateaus by challenging your body in new ways.²⁹
- 6 **Modify your eating patterns:** Experiment with intermittent fasting or changing the timing and frequency of your meals. Some individuals find success with approaches like time-restricted eating or alternate-day fasting.²⁸
- 7 **Stay consistent:** Plateaus can be discouraging, but it's crucial to stay consistent with your healthy habits. Trust the process and remain patient.



Chapter 6: Understanding Weight Loss Plateaus



4 Monitor Non-Scale Indicators

Remember that progress is not solely defined by the number on the scale. Pay attention to non-scale indicators of success, such as changes in body measurements, increased energy levels, improved fitness performance, or clothes fitting better. These indicators can help you stay motivated even if the scale doesn't reflect immediate progress.



5 Seek Support and Professional Guidance

If you're struggling to overcome a weight loss plateau, consider seeking support from a registered dietitian, a certified fitness professional, or a healthcare provider specializing in weight management. They can provide personalized guidance, help you troubleshoot challenges, and offer additional strategies tailored to your specific needs.



By implementing these strategies and staying committed to your healthy lifestyle habits, you can break through weight loss plateaus and continue making progress on your weight management journey.





1 Understanding Emotional Eating

Emotional eating refers to using food as a way to cope with or soothe emotions, rather than eating for physical hunger.²⁴ It can contribute to weight gain and hinder weight management efforts. Take time to identify emotional triggers for eating, such as stress, boredom, loneliness, or sadness. By recognizing these triggers, you can begin to develop healthier coping mechanisms.

2 Mindful Eating

Practising mindful eating involves paying attention to the present moment while eating, focusing on the sensory experience, and listening to your body's hunger and fullness cues. Some strategies to incorporate mindful eating include:³⁰

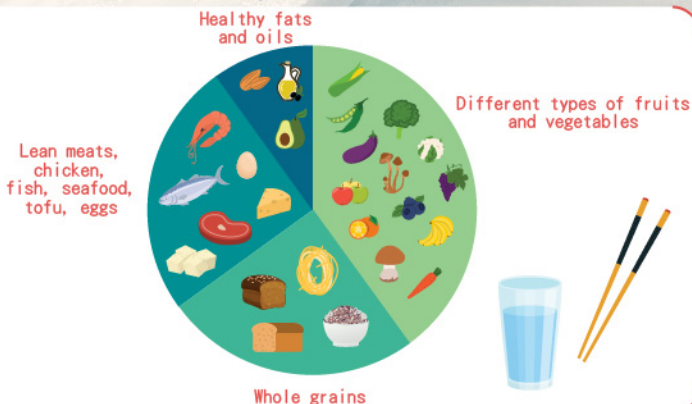
- Eating slowly and savoring each bite.
- Engaging your senses by noticing the colors, textures, and flavors of your food.
- Checking in with your hunger and fullness levels before, during, and after meals.
- Recognizing and respecting your body's signals of hunger and satiety.

3 Building a Balanced Plate

A balanced plate consists of a variety of nutrient-dense foods that provide essential vitamins, minerals, and energy. Aim to include:³¹

- **Colorful fruits and vegetables:** These provide fiber, antioxidants, and important micronutrients.
- **Lean proteins:** Such as poultry, fish, beans, or tofu, which are rich in protein and can help you feel full and satisfied.
- **Whole grains:** Such as quinoa, brown rice, or whole wheat bread, which provide fiber and sustained energy.
- **Healthy fats:** Avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil are good sources of healthy fats that support satiety and overall health.

You can refer to the following "Balanced Plate" to arrange your daily meals.





4 Intuitive Eating

Intuitive eating is a philosophy that encourages you to listen to your body's internal cues of hunger, fullness, and satisfaction. It promotes trusting your body's wisdom and rejecting rigid dieting rules. Some principles of intuitive eating include:³²

- Rejecting the diet mentality and focusing on nourishing your body.
- Honoring your hunger by eating when you're physically hungry.
- Making peace with food by giving yourself unconditional permission to eat.
- Learning to cope with emotions without using food as a primary tool.
- Respecting your body by engaging in joyful movement and self-care.
- Discovering the satisfaction factor by truly savoring and enjoying your food.

5 Overcoming Food Guilt and Shame

Guilt and shame around food can be detrimental to your relationship with food and your overall well-being.³³ Practice self-compassion and remind yourself that no food is inherently "good" or "bad." Instead of labeling foods, focus on moderation, balance, and overall dietary patterns. Let go of perfectionism and embrace flexibility in your eating choices.

6 Seeking Support and Professional Guidance

If you struggle with developing a healthy relationship with food, consider seeking support from a registered dietitian or a therapist specializing in eating disorders or disordered eating. They can provide guidance, support, and help you navigate any underlying emotional or psychological challenges related to food.

By adopting these strategies and working towards a healthier relationship with food, you can create a positive and sustainable approach to eating that supports your weight management goals and promotes overall well-being.



In this chapter, we will explore strategies for maintaining healthy eating habits and making mindful choices when navigating social situations and dining out. These situations can present challenges to weight management, but with the right approach, you can still enjoy socializing while staying on track with your goals.

1 Communicating Your Goals

Share your weight management goals with friends, family, and colleagues to create a supportive environment. Let them know about your dietary preferences or restrictions, if any, and ask for their understanding and cooperation. Clear communication can help avoid awkward situations and ensure you have options that align with your goals.

2 Preparing Ahead of Time

When attending social events or dining out, plan ahead by looking at menus in advance or offering to bring a dish that fits your dietary needs. Having a plan in place helps you make informed choices and reduces the likelihood of impulsive decisions that may not align with your goals.

3 Making Mindful Choices

When faced with a variety of food options, consider the following tips:

- Fill your plate with a balance of vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains.
- Be mindful of portion sizes and practice portion control.
- Choose grilled, baked, or steamed dishes over fried or heavily sauced options.
- Opt for water or unsweetened beverages instead of sugary drinks.
- Slow down and savor each bite, paying attention to feelings of hunger and fullness.



4 Enjoying Indulgences in Moderation

It's okay to indulge occasionally, even when managing your weight. Allow yourself to enjoy small portions of your favorite treats or higher-calorie foods without guilt. Remember that balance and moderation are key. Focus on the overall quality of your diet rather than individual indulgences.

5 Handling Peer Pressure

In social situations, you may encounter peer pressure to indulge in unhealthy foods or drinks. Stay firm in your choices and politely decline if something doesn't align with your goals. Remember that you have the right to prioritize your health and well-being, and true friends will respect your choices.

6 Alcohol and Cocktails

Alcoholic beverages can contribute a significant amount of empty calories and may impair judgment when it comes to food choices.³⁴ If you choose to drink alcohol, be mindful of your consumption and opt for lower-calorie options like light beer, wine spritzers, or spirits mixed with calorie-free mixers.³⁵ Stay hydrated and know your limits.



Chapter 9: Maintaining Long-Term Success



In this final chapter, we will discuss strategies for maintaining long-term success in weight management. Sustaining healthy habits and a positive mindset is crucial for lifelong well-being.

1 Setting Realistic Expectations

Recognize that weight management is a journey with ups and downs. Set realistic goals that are achievable and sustainable for you. Focus on overall health and well-being rather than a specific number on the scale. Celebrate progress, no matter how small, and be patient with yourself.

2 Celebrating Non-Scale Victories

Acknowledge and celebrate non-scale victories such as increased energy, improved fitness levels, better sleep quality, reduced medication needs, and improved confidence. These achievements are just as important as weight loss and can serve as powerful motivators.

3 Continuing Education and Support

Stay informed about nutrition and exercise by reading reputable sources, attending workshops, or seeking guidance from professionals. Join support groups or online communities to connect with others on a similar journey. Surrounding yourself with a supportive network can provide accountability, encouragement, and valuable insights.

4 Embracing Lifestyle Changes

Shift your focus from short-term diets to long-term lifestyle changes. Adopt sustainable habits that you enjoy and can maintain over time. This might include finding physical activities you love, cooking nutritious meals at home, or exploring new recipes and flavors. By making these changes part of your lifestyle, you increase the likelihood of maintaining your achievements.



5 Practicing Self-Care

Prioritize self-care to reduce stress, nurture your mental well-being, and support your physical health. Engage in activities that bring you joy, manage stress through techniques like meditation or deep breathing, get enough sleep, and practice self-compassion. Taking care of yourself holistically enhances your ability to sustain healthy habits.

6 Monitoring and Adjusting

Regularly assess your progress and adjust your strategies as needed. If you find yourself slipping into old habits or experiencing setbacks, reflect on the factors that contributed to the change and make necessary adjustments. Remember that maintaining long-term success requires ongoing self-awareness and adaptability.

By implementing these strategies and maintaining a positive mindset, you can achieve and sustain long-term success in weight management. Remember that your health and well-being are worth the effort, and you have the power to create a vibrant and fulfilling life.





If your body weight is largely off the target range ($\text{BMI} \geq 27.5 \text{ kg/m}^2$)⁴² and cannot achieve the weight management goal by lifestyle modification alone, you may need to consult healthcare professionals to use suitable pharmaceutical or surgical methods to help you for further weight control.

Please remember that these medications and surgeries may be associated with other health risks and certain side effects. Thus, it is crucial for you to follow the instructions of your doctors and make decisions carefully.

1 Medications for obesity

1 Reduce Appetite

These medications act on certain areas of the brain to affect the signalling for hunger and satiety sensations and reduce the appetite, which may help you change your eating habits and achieve weight loss goals.^{36,37} These drugs may increase the risks of certain psychiatric disorders and physical health issues.^{36,37}

2 Reduce Lipid Absorption

These medications act on the digestive system to reduce the absorption of lipids in foods and increase the direct lipid excretion through the gut.^{36,37} You need to follow a low-fat diet when taking such medications. Otherwise, you may experience severe diarrhea and gas passing. These drugs may be associated with liver injury in certain patients.^{36,37}

3 GLP-1 Receptor Agonists & Dual GIP/GLP-1 Receptor Agonists

These medications are usually for the treatment of type 2 diabetes but can also be used for treating obesity.^{36,37} By stimulating receptors of certain hormones to increase the metabolism of sugar and lipids in the body. They can also suppress appetite, facilitating weight loss.^{36,37} These medications may have common side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and swelling at the injection site.^{36,37}

GIP, glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide; GLP, glucagon-like peptide



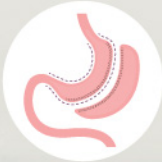


2 Surgical options for Obesity

Bariatric surgery refers to surgical procedures by modifying the digestive system to reduce the amount of food that is absorbed in order to obtain a weight loss effect. Common surgeries include:³⁸



1 Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery



2 Sleeve gastrectomy

Surgery is an invasive type of treatment, with risks such as bleeding, infections, and anastomotic leaks. However, modern surgery and anaesthesia have advanced, which massively lowers the risk of complications and adverse events.^{39,40} Surgical procedures are considered an effective treatment for obesity and metabolic syndromes and have been widely incorporated into various guidelines.^{41,42}

Before surgical treatment, you should consult your doctor carefully to weigh the risks and benefits. Consider a choice that suits you and pay attention to relevant postoperative care and precautions.³⁸



Congratulations on embarking on this journey towards a healthier you! We wish you success in battling obesity, and embracing a healthier lifestyle!

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