

## Patient information leaflet - Planning for privately funded bariatric (weight loss) surgery

You may be thinking about having bariatric surgery done privately (not with the NHS). Not all bariatric centres offer a complete service, and this could cause difficulties for your care.

**Aftercare following surgery is life-long and essential to supporting a healthy lifestyle.** If you do arrange bariatric surgery privately you will not be able to access, follow up care or dietary supplements through the NHS as such care and treatment is not something that is routinely commissioned by the NHS unless you have had your surgery on the NHS.

*If you have bariatric surgery privately you cannot rely on the NHS for routine follow-up*

If you require emergency treatment or symptomatic treatment following your weight loss surgery, please be assured that the NHS services will be available to support you.

*If you are considering seeking private treatment, you should discuss this with your GP surgery before taking action.*

There are some things that need to be considered before choosing a provider:

### **Going abroad for bariatric surgery**

The British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society (BOMSS) strongly advises UK residents to be cautious when considering bariatric surgery abroad. Some of the potential risks include:

- **Poor quality** - substandard and falsified medical products (products that do not meet acceptable quality standards or specifications).
- **Blood-borne viral infections** - in some countries, less strict infection control and hygiene practices may increase the risk of being exposed to infected blood, tissue or bodily fluids.
- **Germs which cause infections** - due to overuse of antibiotics in some countries around the world means that, antimicrobial drugs such as certain antibiotics may be ineffective against some germs (bacteria) that cause infections. Effective treatment against certain infections may not always be possible.<sup>1</sup>

### **Psychological support**

<sup>1</sup> [Travelling Abroad for Medical Treatment - Fit for Travel](#)

Psychological (mental health) support is usually needed before and after your bariatric surgery. This is important to help ensure that surgery is the most suitable option for you and to support adherence to postoperative care. Check with your chosen bariatric centre to agree the support which is best for you.

## *Recommendations by NICE – Before your surgery*

It is vital that before your surgery, the bariatric centre offers access to health and social care professionals who have expertise in conducting medical, nutritional, psychological and surgical assessments for people living with obesity and can assess whether surgery is suitable for you. In the UK there is a BMI criterion of 40kg/m<sup>2</sup> or more, or between 35kg/m<sup>2</sup> with a significant health condition to be eligible for weight loss surgery.

This should include:

- Fitness for anaesthesia and surgery.
- Your medical needs (for example, existing comorbidities, nutritional deficiencies, diabetes, cholesterol level, kidney function)
- Your nutritional status (provide support and information to help prepare for surgery)
- Any psychological (mental health) needs that, if addressed, would help ensure surgery is suitable and support adherence to postoperative care requirements.
- Previous attempts to manage their weight, and any past response to a weight management intervention (such as one provided by a specialist weight management service)
- Any other factors that may affect their response after surgery (for example, language barriers, learning disabilities and neurodevelopmental conditions, deprivation and other factors related to health inequalities)
- Whether any individual arrangements need to be made before the day of the surgery (for example, if they need additional dietary or psychological support, or support to manage existing or new comorbidities)

Your chosen bariatric centre may recommend that you follow a low calorie/low carbohydrate diet before your operation to reduce the size of your liver. Because low calorie/low carbohydrate diets may not provide all the nutrients you need, you may need to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement. Your chosen bariatric centre should tell you whether you need to do this and the type of supplement and amount to take - you will need to arrange for these to be prescribed on a private basis.

## *What care should you expect after you have bariatric surgery?*

It is important to understand that if you decide to have bariatric surgery privately, either abroad or in the UK, you are not entitled to routine NHS follow-up for the first 2 years post-surgery. You should ensure that your private provider is including this in your package of care. Urgent and emergency medical care will be provided by the NHS if required. Lifelong follow-up care is needed after surgery to ensure that your nutritional needs are met.

## *Recommendations by NICE<sup>2</sup> – Postoperative follow-up care*

NICE guidance recommends a follow-up care package for a minimum of 2 years; your chosen bariatric centre should provide this it should be included in the package you have agreed. This should include:

- Monitoring nutritional intake, including macronutrient and micronutrient status, this includes routine annual blood monitoring for: FBC, Corrected Calcium (bone profile if not available), LFTs, U+Es, Vitamin B12 + Folate, Ferritin, HbA1c, lipids, Vitamin D, Zinc, Copper, Selenium and Vitamins E, A or K1.
- Monitoring for comorbidities
- Medications review
- Individualised dietary and nutritional assessment, advice and support
- Advice and support on physical activity
- Psychological support tailored to the person
- Information about professionally led or peer-support groups.

After this two-year follow-up period, it is recommended that your nutritional needs and right supplementation requirements are monitored for the rest of your life. These appointments are likely to be with either a dietitian or a GP within a locally agreed shared-care protocol. The consequences of not receiving this follow-up care can be severe and include weight regain, depression, nutritional deficiencies, osteoporosis, anaemia and death.

## *What nutritional supplements will you need after you have bariatric surgery?*

Following bariatric surgery, patients are at a greater risk of nutritional deficiencies and require annual nutritional monitoring and routine nutritional supplements which should be continued for life.<sup>3</sup> You will need to arrange for these to be prescribed on a private basis and should take the amount advised by your chosen bariatric centre. Routine lifelong nutritional supplements in absence of any nutritional deficiencies:

- Forceval 1 tablet or OD or equivalent
- Adcal D3 chewable tablet BD or equivalent (eg. calcium citrate)
- Ferrous sulphate 200mg OD **OR** Ferrous fumarate 210mg OD **OR** Ferrous gluconate 300mg OD
- IM vitamin B12 injection every 3 months (even with normal/high levels to prevent deficiency developing)

**The ICB does not maintain a list of approved private providers, but if a GP would like advice or support regarding the signposting of patients to a suitable UK private provider, they would be welcome to contact the Alliance primary care team.**

<sup>2</sup> [Quality statement 6: Follow-up care after bariatric surgery | Obesity: clinical assessment and management | Quality standards | NICE](#)

<sup>3</sup> [BOMSS post-bariatric surgery nutritional guidance for GPs](#)

Other useful guidance / further reading: -

[Travelling Abroad for Medical Treatment - Fit for Travel](#)

[Recommendations | Obesity: identification, assessment and management |](#)

[Guidance | NICE](#)

[BOMSS Statement on Bariatric Tourism](#)

[Going abroad for medical treatment - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)