

Healthy behaviors determine weight-loss surgery success

23 December 2016, by Katie Baildon

Bariatric surgery can slim your body, but attitude and behavior also play key roles in long-term weight loss, according to new research from the Cornell Food and Brand Lab.

"Although very effective, [bariatric surgery](#) is not a low-effort means of losing weight," said lead author Anna-Leena Vuorinen of VTT Technical Research Center of Finland, who performed the research as a visiting scholar at the Food and Brand Lab.

"Individuals undergo invasive surgery and are required to follow strict diet in order to ensure sustained weight loss and to prevent complications, but the key to meeting weight loss objectives, might be in learning to enjoy healthy eating and exercise," she said.

Vuorinen, along with Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, and researchers from Duke and Stanford universities, surveyed 475 people, mostly women, at least one year after surgery to see how their enjoyment of health-related behaviors had changed after the procedure and how enjoyment related to weight-loss success.

They found that two years after surgery, those who reported increased enjoyment of exercise and eating healthy foods also were more likely to meet weight-loss goals.

Of those surveyed who experienced successful weight loss more than two years following surgery, more than 70 percent reported enjoying eating healthy foods more than they did before surgery. Less than half of those with unsuccessful weight loss reported that they enjoyed eating healthy foods more.

When it came to exercise, 59 percent of those with successful weight loss two to five years after surgery reported getting more enjoyment from exercise than before surgery whereas for those unsuccessful in their weight loss, 43 percent

reported enjoying exercise more.

Similarly, among those who had five or more years since their surgery, nearly half of those successful with their weight loss reported enjoying exercise more than before, whereas only 28 percent of those unsuccessful with their weight loss reported enjoying exercise more.

Furthermore, the researchers found that those who sought support from therapists, nutritionists or personal trainers continued to achieve weight goals five years after surgery.

Most patients who go through a bariatric [surgery](#) lose a significant amount of weight during the first two years. The challenge for many is to keep the weight off. To be successful, enjoyment of healthy behaviors seems to play a role, according to the research.

"If you don't enjoy [healthy eating](#) or exercising, seeking the support of a health professional might change your mind and keep you on track with your [weight loss](#) goals years down the road," said Wansink, the John S. Dyson Professor of Marketing in the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Marketing.

The findings appeared in *Bariatric Surgical Practice and Patient Care*.

More information: Anna-Leena Vuorinen et al. Shifts in the Enjoyment of Healthy and Unhealthy Behaviors Affect Short- and Long-Term Postbariatric Weight Loss, *Bariatric Surgical Practice and Patient Care* (2016). [DOI: 10.1089/bari.2016.0036](#)

Provided by Cornell University

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