



UMassMemorial
Weight Center



A HANDBOOK FOR SURGICAL TRACK PATIENTS
A NEW LIFE AWAITS

INTERIOR COVER, FOLDER POCKET

CONGRATULATIONS FOR MAKING THIS LIFE-CHANGING COMMITMENT!

You’re about to embark on a journey to better health. The UMass Memorial Weight Center team is here to help you achieve long-lasting weight loss. Physicians and specialists in nutrition, exercise and behavioral medicine will be there for you every step of the way. Here’s a look at the information you’ll find in this guide:

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Patient Agreement

Succeeding with weight loss surgery requires long-term dedication and discipline. This agreement outlines our expectations for patients taking part in our program.

WEIGHT CENTER APPOINTMENTS

If you must cancel an appointment, including a clinic visit or test, call the Weight Center in advance at 774-443-3886. You should immediately reschedule all canceled or missed appointments. Surgery may be delayed or may not be an option if you repeatedly cancel or miss appointments.

OBTAINING MEDICAL RECORDS

If we request additional medical records after your medical intake appointment, you can help us obtain them. Ask your provider to fax the records to 774-443-3913 or mail them to UMass Memorial Weight Center, 55 Lake Avenue North, Worcester, MA 01655. You may also bring the records to your next appointment.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

You must abstain from tobacco, marijuana and all other legal and illegal drugs except as prescribed or approved by a physician. Cigarette smokers must set a quit date and quit permanently. Patients must honestly discuss alcohol intake and curtail or discontinue use during preparation and beyond.

DIETARY CHANGES

Bring a completed Food Journal (see page XX) covering at least a seven-day period, including one weekend day, to your nutrition intake. As you move through your intake appointments, we will work with you to establish healthier eating habits. Weight loss is expected as you prepare for surgery. The weight loss requirement for each patient varies, but weight gain almost always slows the preparation process.

BIRTH CONTROL

Women should avoid pregnancy during preparation for weight loss surgery. For women choosing gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy, conception should not occur for 18-24 months following surgery.

EXERCISE

Most Weight Center patients will learn about exercise and increase their physical activity levels. See page XX for more information.

SURGERY DISCUSSION GROUPS

All patients preparing for surgery should attend. Pay attention to patients who have had good results, but also those who are not getting the results they expected.

If you have any questions or concerns during this program, please speak with a Weight Center provider right away.

Smoking & Weight Loss Surgery

Our surgeons only perform weight loss surgery on patients who have quit smoking.

WHY IS QUITTING SO IMPORTANT?

Smoking increases the risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer and breathing problems. Being overweight only increases these risks. Quitting is the first step an overweight smoker must take in working toward better health. People who struggle to quit often have struggle to make other lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise habits. These changes are necessary to achieve long-term success with weight loss. Quitting smoking shows you’re ready to make positive changes in your life.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF RETURNING TO SMOKING AFTER SURGERY?

Smokers are at greater risk for developing respiratory problems, including pneumonia, following weight loss surgery. The chemicals in cigarette smoke can narrow blood vessels and hurt the body’s ability to heal after surgery. This increases the risk of a leak, which occurs when the connections made between the stomach and intestine don’t seal properly. Skin incisions can also heal poorly with smokers. Smoking also greatly increases the long-term risk of developing ulcers, which can cause severe pain, bleeding and serious infections inside the abdomen.

HOW CAN YOU GET HELP QUITTING?

Contact your primary care physician or pharmacist. You can also explore the many resources available online, including makesmokinghistory.org (or call 800-879-8678).

Fee & Insurance Information

The enrollment fee for Surgical Track patients is \$350. Depending on your insurance plan, you may be responsible for co-payments for certain services. Payment is due at the beginning of the preparation process. Please note: In cases of financial hardship, we can help explain options such as budget plans.nAt this point, you should already have contacted your insurance provider for details on coverage. If you haven’t done so yet, please make sure you:

- Know the name of your insurance company and policy.
- Have a copy of the section of your policy that discusses weight loss surgery, with requirements for pre-surgery preparation.
- Know whether your surgery is covered or excluded. If weight loss surgery is a “covered service” or “covered benefit,” your insurance provider will likely pay for the procedure and associated visits. If weight loss surgery is an “excluded service,” you may not have coverage.
- Understand that you’re not asking for “prior authorization” for surgery. That step comes later, after you’ve done your pre-surgery preparation.

If you have questions about coverage, contact your insurance provider or the Weight Center.

Appointments, Group Meetings & Consultation

As a Weight Center patient, you have access to a variety of services that help you meet your weight loss goals. We will work with you to develop a plan to prepare you for surgery and lifelong success.

INTAKE APPOINTMENTS INCLUDE

MEDICAL INTAKE

We review your medical history and evaluate whether or not weight loss surgery is an appropriate option for you.

NUTRITIONAL INTAKE

We discuss how your eating habits impact your health and well-being, and schedule any necessary follow-ups.

BEHAVIORAL INTAKE

We explore how your behaviors and activities contribute to your overall health, and schedule any necessary follow-ups.

EXERCISE INTAKE

We establish an exercise program that’s appropriate for your strength and abilities.

INDIVIDUAL FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS

As you move through the program, individual follow-up appointments with Weight Center providers are usually necessary for complete preparation.

SURGERY SKILLS GROUPS

Led by a Weight Center provider, these two 90-minute sessions teach essential skills for long-term success after surgery.

SURGERY DISCUSSION GROUPS

During these monthly meetings, you connect with patients who have had weight loss surgery and others considering or preparing for it.

SURGERY SUPPORT GROUPS

Led by a Weight Center provider, we will discuss each other’s challenges and accomplishments as they relate to weight loss surgery.

PRE- AND POST-SURGERY CONSULTATIONS

You will meet with a Weight Center surgeon to discuss weight loss surgery options and to address any questions or concerns before and after surgery.

This is My Journey

The process of preparing for and going through with weight loss surgery won’t be easy. Most everyone has moments of doubt along the way. To help you stay the course, it can help to remember why you’ve embarked on this journey. Please take a few moments to capture your thoughts below. Then you can always refer back to this page to remind yourself of the rewards that lie ahead.

I’M DOING THIS BECAUSE:

I MOST LOOK FORWARD TO DOING THESE THINGS:

THIS IS HOW I WANT TO FEEL:

Nutrition Basics

Here are some helpful nutrition-related guidelines to keep in mind:

1. PLAN YOUR MEALS AND SNACKS EACH DAY

- Three regularly scheduled meals and two to three snacks, three to four hours apart

2. MAKE SURE MOST OF YOUR DIET CONSISTS OF:

- Lean proteins:** Chicken, turkey, seafood, low-fat dairy products (yogurt, low-fat cheese and cottage cheese), beans, nuts, seeds, eggs, peanut butter.
- Fruits:** Apples, blueberries, strawberries, bananas and oranges (fresh, frozen, or canned and packed in water).
- Non-starchy vegetables:** Broccoli, green beans, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower. These may be fresh, frozen or canned. Choose canned vegetables that are labeled “low sodium,” or rinse and drain them before preparing.

3. SMALL AMOUNTS OF HIGH-CARBOHYDRATE FOODS

- such as rice, bread, pasta, low-sugar cereals, starchy vegetables (corn, peas, and potatoes) are okay but don’t overdo these:
- Pay attention not only to how much of starchy carbohydrates you’re eating, but also the quality (i.e. whole wheat bread is better than white bread).
 - Severely limit your intake of concentrated sweets (cakes, cookies and candy).

4. PLAN YOUR DRINKS EACH DAY

- Don’t drink** sweetened beverages (juice, regular soda, high-calorie coffee drinks).
- Avoid** carbonated (soda, seltzer water) and alcoholic beverages.
- Drink fewer** caffeinated beverages (coffee).
- Drink more** water, zero-calorie flavored waters or very low-calorie (less than 10 calories per eight ounces) beverages.

5. KEEP A FOOD JOURNAL, EITHER ON PAPER OR ELECTRONICALLY

You should keep track of your eating and drinking habits each day using a table like this.

	TIME	WHAT YOU ATE & DRANK	WHERE & WITH WHOM	NOTES (E.G. FEELINGS, HUNGER)
BREAKFAST				
SNACK (IF ANY)				
LUNCH				
SNACK (IF ANY)				
DINNER				
SNACK (IF ANY)				

Electronic Food Journals are also great tools to help keep track of your eating habits. Many are available online with free downloadable apps for your smart phone, such as MyFitnessPal.



Smart Snacking

Healthy eating isn't just about what you have for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It's also about the snacks you have at other times of the day. Yes, it's okay to snack when you're trying to lose weight! The key is to play it smart. Try to limit snacks to those times when you're truly hungry—that means recognizing the difference between “head hunger” and “stomach hunger.” Depending on your calorie needs, plan on two to three daily snacks of 100-150 calories apiece. Ideally, snacks should contain a mixture of protein and carbohydrates, or fiber and carbohydrates. A medium apple with a light cheese stick is one example. Here are a few more ideas that can help you make smart snacking part of your day-to-day diet:

- 6 low-fat whole grain crackers with 1 ounces of low-fat cheese
- 1 medium apple with 1 tablespoon of butter
- ½ whole wheat English muffin with ¼ cup low-fat cottage cheese and sliced tomato
- ¼ cup or 1 ounce of nuts: cashews almonds, pistachios, etc
- ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese with ½ frozen fruit
- 1 cup of raw vegetables
- 1 medium apple or ½ cup fresh fruit with 2 wedges light creamy Swiss cheese
- 6 ounces of plain or fruited yogurt or low fat Greek yogurt
- 4 to 5 large shrimp with 2 teaspoons of cocktail sauce
- 2 ounces low-sodium deli turkey rolled up with 2 tablespoons avocado or 2 tablespoons hummus

“Surgery isn’t a magic pill. You can’t go back to old habits. If you’re considering weight loss surgery, you have to be prepared to change your life, to leave behind those things that got you where you are—fast food, ice cream, whatever. You have to be ready to face those demons, but the support you get at the Weight Center means you won’t be facing them alone.” CARL GAMBERDELLA, *patient stats to go here*

Exercise Program

As a Weight Center patient, you’ll have access to our clinical exercise physiologist who will help you develop a personalized exercise plan that you can incorporate into your daily life to promote weight loss and better health.

YOUR PLAN WILL HELP YOU LEARN

- How to become more motivated to exercise
- Techniques to adapt exercise for physical limitations
- Strategies and resources for limited time and equipment

Our exercise physiologist holds a master’s degrees in clinical exercise physiology and offers exercise education, coaching and instruction focused on weight loss and other health issues, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and joint pain. Once you’ve been cleared to see a clinical exercise physiologist,* here’s how to get started:

1. Schedule your first appointment through the Weight Center.
2. Before your appointment, watch the video on our pre-surgery exercise program at tinyurl.com/p6vddgg6.
3. At your appointment, you’ll discuss your current exercise habits and activity level, challenges and goals. You’ll typically do some light exercise during visits, so always wear sneakers and comfortable clothing.
4. For tips on exercise, motivation and weight loss, check out the Keep Moving weekly blog at: keepmovingweekly.wordpress.com.

* *In some cases, the Weight Center will need test results or information from your primary care physician, cardiologist or other providers before you start the exercise program. Participation will be deferred to a later date for some patients. Please don’t start exercising until you’ve been cleared to start an exercise program.*

If you ever experience any symptoms with exercise, contact your medical provider before continuing with your exercise program.

“There are no words to describe the impact of the surgery. My blood pressure and cholesterol levels are no longer a concern. My energy level is great. I can do athletic things now that were unthinkable before. I compete in obstacle course races; I’m even certified to teach spin classes.”

TRACY LEWIS, patient stats to go here

The Truth About Exercise Myths

In addition to developing exercise plans, our exercise physiologist is also focused on keeping you motivated. Here are the facts about some common myths that can discourage people from exercising.

MYTH #1 “I’m just not motivated.”

We can all find the motivation to meet important goals. For many people, the key to finding the motivation to exercise starts with setting achievable goals.

MYTH #2 “Just moving more doesn’t count.”

Sitting around makes you more likely to gain weight and develop heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other illnesses. Moving more throughout the day burns calories and helps prevent an array of diseases. So take the stairs rather than the elevator, walk to the store instead of driving, etc.

MYTH #3: “Exercise has to be hard to be worth it.”

Moderate exercise three to seven days a week can make a huge difference. Make the commitment to walk, bike, swim, dance or do something else that involves continuous movement for about 30 minutes a day.

MYTH #4: “I’ll get big, bulky muscles with too much strength training.”

Strength training is an important part of any exercise program, and the Weight Center can offer guidance to help you get the types of results you want.

MYTH #5: “Stretching isn’t worth my time.”

Stretching after any physical activity can produce many benefits, including “resetting” muscles, increasing flexibility, reducing muscle soreness and risk of injury, and improving focus and stress management.





Steve Walach | “I was really ready for this to happen.”

Steve Walach is 6’ 3” and weighed 362 lbs. at his peak. The combination was taking a toll on his joints and muscles, but he couldn’t seem to do anything about the weight. “I had some success with low-carb diets, but I always eventually put it all back on,” he says. “Being overweight made everything more difficult as I got older. Harder to sleep, harder to get up a flight of stairs, harder to get motivated to exercise. Plus, I was taking blood pressure medications and diagnosed as pre-diabetic.”

When Steve enrolled in the Weight Center program in July 2013, he wasn’t sure about having surgery. The first few months went very well, thanks to his getting on an exercise program and working closely with our nutritionist. “I learned a lot about the right portion sizes as well as the roles of protein, fats and carbohydrates and how they all work together,” he says. “Having that knowledge has empowered me to make better choices from a nutritional standpoint.”

After losing 25 lbs. pretty quickly, Steve decided to enter the Surgical Track in October 2013. Gastric sleeve surgery followed two months later. Today, he’s down to 225 lbs.— his stable weight for six months running. “My blood pressure is scary good,” he exclaims. “I’m off the meds and the CPAP machine [for sleep apnea]. And I’m much more active now, doing things like biking, hiking, gardening and walking.” Steve’s advice for those considering weight loss surgery? “It won’t fix everything,” he cautions. “You need to embrace the program mentally and physically, and commit to the necessary lifestyle changes to make it work.”



Karen Daley | “I really enjoy my life, no longer living a food addiction.”

Karen Daley says she grew up “chubby.” In high school, she practically starved herself in an effort to be thinner. “No breakfast or lunch, just a little dinner,” she remembers. “It was very clearly unhealthy, but I was desperate.” For the next 30+ years, Karen experienced the familiar “yo-yo” effect: Lose some weight, gain back some more and then restart the cycle. By her early 50s, she was pre-diabetic and had high blood pressure along with joint problems and emerging heart issues. And she was beginning to lose hope. “No matter what I did, I just didn’t seem to get the long-term results,” she says. “It felt like I was stuck in mud. I decided it was time for a change.”

Karen enrolled in the Weight Program in June 2012. While she worked on improving her eating and exercise habits, she also took an exhaustive approach to researching the topic of gastric sleeve surgery. By the end of the year, she was ready to do it. “I actually ‘bed danced’ as they rolled me into surgery—I was that happy,” she laughs. “I knew with every fiber of my being that it was the right choice for my body.” Surgery along with a newfound ability to listen to her stomach have helped Karen maintain a more healthy weight. Her related health issues have gone away, and she’s enjoying dancing pain-free for the first time in years. “Whatever you thought you knew before going to the Weight Center, forget it,” she recommends. “Start fresh. Open yourself up to relearning how to eat and changing your relationship with food.”



Tina Rambarran | “I never imagined this would be my life. Never.”

It wasn’t until college that Tina Rambarran began to put on weight. A self-described “secretive eater,” Tina started gaining 40 to 50 pounds each year and rarely went out with friends or really living life, she recalled. “Eating became a friend and a habit,” she said, “and I just didn’t know how to stop.” It was more comfortable to stay home and avoid people. “I didn’t want people to see what I had done to myself.”

In her mid-30s, at 455 pounds, Tina decided that enough was enough. She had tried many diets but needed real help. She turned to the experts at the UMass Memorial Weight Center and, after several months of learning and incorporating new eating and exercise habits into her life, had gastric bypass surgery in May 2010. *Since then, Tina has lost 320 pounds.*

“I can’t say enough about my surgeon, Dr. Donald Czerniach, and all of the staff at the Weight Center,” said Tina. “They each made this my journey and taught me how to take the small steps to make this big change in my life.” Tina also credits the support of her longtime boyfriend Brad, now her husband (he proposed a month before her surgery) and her family. Brad now makes Tina’s protein shakes and describes her as “amazing” and “more confident, outgoing, bubbly,” and says he has learned from her how to eat healthier, too. These days, instead of hiding, Tina is learning to say “yes” to invitations to go out and enjoy life.

Notes and Considerations:

“I can’t say enough about all of the staff at the Weight Center. They each made this my journey and taught me how to take the small steps to make this big change in my life.”

TINA RAMBARRAN, patient stats to go here

INTERIOR BACK COVER, FOLDER POCKET



Patients and families trust UMass Memorial Medical Center as the region's leading academic medical center, committed to improving the health of our communities in Central Massachusetts. With our partner, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, we are committed to excellence in primary and specialty care, community service, teaching and research. The Medical Center offers advanced technology and support services for patients and families, providing the region with specialists renowned for their expertise in caring for adults and children. Visit www.umassmemorial.org. General information: 508-334-1000



UMass Memorial Health Care is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 12,000 employees and 1,600 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. Our member hospitals and entities include UMass Memorial – Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial – HealthAlliance Hospital, UMass Memorial – Marlborough Hospital, UMass Memorial Medical Center and UMass Memorial – Community Healthlink, our behavioral health agency. With our teaching and research partner, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, our extensive primary care network and our cancer, diabetes, heart and vascular, orthopedic and surgery programs, UMass Memorial delivers safe, high-quality and compassionate care. Visit www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org.

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To find a physician in your community, call 855-UMASS-MD (855-862-7763).

