

The Bariatric Bulletin of the West Penn Bariatric Surgery Center

June 2007

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Issue Highlights

Support Group Info

Patient Feature

Patient Reunion

Nutrition Note

Tips from Dr. Tom

Support Group

The next support group will be on **Monday, June 18, 2007** in the Wintergarden Conference Center at West Penn Hospital (1st floor, across from the cafeteria) at **6:30 pm**. The speaker will be Cindy Cotters, registered dietitian. At **6:00 pm**, there will be an informational session presented by one of the surgeons. **It is mandatory for pre-op patients to attend at least one of these support groups before surgery.** This support group is for people who are considering a gastric bypass, people who have had surgery, and friends and family. Hope to see you there! Next support group: July 16 – speaker – Dr. Newton – plastic surgeon.

Post-op Group

Susan Hawkins, an associate of Dr. Tom Petrone, is presently leading a support group for up to 12 people who have already had surgery. The next one is scheduled for **Thursday, June 21, 2007 from 6-8pm pm** at West Penn Hospital in the Karen Jones room, 2nd floor, North Tower. Please contact Julie to reserve your spot.

There is a fee of \$20 per patient and \$5 per guest for each 2-hour session. Limited financial assistance is available.

Patient Reunion!!!

Back by popular demand, we are planning a patient reunion. We had the first one in January of 2004, and a second one is overdue! This reunion is tentatively scheduled for Monday, August 20, 2007 at 6:30 pm at Phipps Conservatory in the outdoor garden. We are planning a cocktail reception style gathering, with food and music. If you have any ideas for the reunion, feel free to call or email Julie with your suggestions. Mark your calendars! More details to come.

Patient Feature

Name: Donald C.

Date of Surgery: 10-04-06

Pounds lost: 115

Best thing about weight loss:

"I feel 10 years younger and 10 times better."

Most surprising insight: "I didn't expect to not have any problems at all. I thought I would have some, but I don't have any at all."

Comment: "It changed my life. I hope it could change someone else's as well!"

Before



After

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distracts you and what makes you feel good. Therefore, you are your best system of support. Your family and friends are also an important source of support as well. Your weight loss journey affects everyone who loves you and cares about you. The way they deal with your weight loss and desire to change greatly impacts the way you deal with this process.

In our preoperative psychological exam and in the post-operative support group we ask patients to talk about what the surgery has meant in various areas of their lives, (social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical). Family members experience change in these areas, too. For example, at any family socials that include eating together, from dinner at home to larger family gatherings, our patients tell us that some family members really pay attention to what and how they are eating. For some, this is a supportive experience, while others feel that the attention makes them uncomfortable. They describe a range of feelings from loved and cared for to feeling pressured to perform. They describe a range of thoughts from confusion to being very clear minded about their choices of what to eat, who to eat with and how to handle the

pressure. It is important for you to do all you can to help maximize the help and minimize the hassle you may get from them. In other words, "help them, help you." Don't assume they know how to help or expect them to help, without communicating what you need. Let them know how much you care about them and appreciate their efforts while being as clear as you can about how they can help. Some days it may mean running to the store to make sure you have enough Crystal Lite to keep you on track. On other days it may mean just listening to you talk about a particularly rough day sticking to your diet. Be specific and tell them you're not looking for advice, just understanding.

In the end the patients and their families that navigate the changes best are the one who follow these guidelines. 1) **Talk** about your experience and feelings together. Keep an open dialogue about what helps and what makes you feel uncomfortable, especially at family social events. 2) **Trust** yourself and each other to say and do what is in all of your best interests. Families are often our best source of support. 3) **Feel**. Pay attention to your feelings and share them. Do not assume that your family members know what you are thinking or feeling about the surgery.

Letting family members in on how you are all feelings is one of the main ingredients to a successful surgery experience. Finally, if you find that you or your family members are having a difficult time following these guidelines and any of you are struggling, please call Dr. Petrone, one of our dietitians, Cindy or Megan or attend one of our post-op support groups for help.

Nutrition Note and Tips from Dr. Tom

This month, Cindy Cotters, dietitian, and Dr. Tom, psychologist, collaborated on an article together. Enjoy!

Many of our patients have reported their bariatric surgery has been, "a real family affair." They describe the ways that they are not the only ones affected by their pre and postoperative surgery experience. Although they are the ones having the procedure, all of the members of the family feel the impact of the changes.

You are your best source of information on the struggles of your weight loss. You are the one who knows best what motivates you,

Follow-Up

It is *very important* for you to follow-up with your surgeon on a regular basis. The regular follow-up schedule after surgery is at 2 weeks, then months 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 18, 24, then yearly. If you have missed any appointments, please contact the office ASAP to schedule your next appointment.

Contact - to sign up for the post-op group, to sign up to receive this newsletter via email, or to offer any ideas or suggestions, please contact Julie at jmaurer@wpahs.org or 412-235-5902.

Call our Event Line at 412-235-5913 for up-to-the-minute cancellations or changes.