

The Bariatric Bulletin of the West Penn Bariatric Surgery Center

June 2008

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Support Group

The next support group will be on **Monday, June 16, 2008** 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 bariatric surgeons. **It is mandatory for pre-op patients to attend at least one support group before surgery.** This support group is for people who are considering a gastric bypass, people who have had surgery, and friends and family.

Post-op Group

Susan Hawkins, an associate of Dr. Tom Petrone, will be leading the next post-op support group for up to 12 people who have already had surgery. It is scheduled for **Thursday, June 19, 2008 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 Feature

Name: Nancy C.

Date of Surgery: 1-15-07

Pounds lost: 103

Best thing about weight loss: "The increased mobility that I have. I was using a scooter before surgery. I am now able to walk."

Before:



Most surprising insight:

"Was how nice it is to go to a store and actually look forward to buying clothes. Also, the fact that I actually feel full and satisfied on a small amount of food is amazing."

Comment: "I have recommended many people to see Dr. Gagne since my surgery. Even with some complications related to previous weight loss surgeries, I would absolutely do it again."

After



Nutrition Note

Lately, many urban myths have been circulated through the internet warning us of the dangers of aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal) and associating it to numerous ailments. These allegations are not based on science. The

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safety of aspartame has been demonstrated numerous times and backed by over 200 scientific studies. Recently, several government and expert committees carefully evaluated these internet stories and found them to be false, thereby reconfirming the safety of its use. More specifically, a National Institutes of Health study, conducted by the National Cancer Institute, agrees that aspartame does not increase the risk of leukemia, lymphoma, or brain cancer. Leading health authorities, such as the American Medical Association, the American Dietetic Association, and the American Diabetes Association all hold the position that aspartame is safe.

When you consume a food containing aspartame, it breaks down into two amino acids: aspartic acid and phenylalanine. These two amino acids are found in several of the foods you normally eat, such as meat, vegetables, and milk. The body uses them in the same way regardless of whether they came from an aspartame containing food or common foods. Another component resulting from the breakdown of aspartame in foods is a small amount of methanol which is given off as CO₂ (carbon dioxide) It's what you breathe out everyday. It does

not form formaldehyde as a number of e-mails have stated.

One group that should not use aspartame containing foods are those with a rare genetic disease, PKU. These individuals cannot metabolize phenylalanine properly and need to limit their intake of phenylalanine from all foods as well as aspartame.

Why use aspartame at all?? It offers flexibility in budgeting carbohydrate allowance and greater variety in finding foods that can fit into our meal plans. It helps satisfy one's taste for something sweet without adding all the extra calories and it aids in maintaining blood sugar levels for those of us with diabetes.

Psychology Corner

Linnea McQuiston is starting an educational/support group for patients **before surgery**.

"It's not just about food..."

- Where - West Penn Bariatric Center Waiting Room – Cercone Building
- When - Monday evenings 6:30-8:00. Participants will be asked to attend 3 consecutive meetings, which run on the first, second and fourth Monday of the month.
- Price - \$20.00 per session, some insurances taken, co-pay not to exceed

\$20.00. Sliding scale can be provided.

- To register Contact Julie Maurer at 412-235-5902

The tentative dates for the sessions of this group are:

- *July* * 7, 14, 28
- *Sept* * 1, 8, 22
- *Nov.* - 3, 10, 24

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. Additionally, if you have not followed up in awhile, you may be receiving a phone call from Lorraine who is working on a project now to contact all patients who have not followed up. She will just want you to answer some simple questions about how you are doing.

New Arrival

As you may recall, Megan Drudy left our office to have her second son. Well, he has arrived! Josiah David Drudy was born on May 29, 2008. Mom, baby, big brother and Daddy are all doing well. Congrats Megan and Keith!



Contact – Julie Maurer at 412-235-5902 or jmaurer@wpahs.org to be added to or removed from lists or with suggestions.



Ranked #1 bariatric surgery program in Pennsylvania, top 5% in the nation by HealthGrades!