

The Bariatric Bulletin of the West Penn Bariatric Surgery Center

May 2007

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Support Group

The next support group will be on **Monday, May 21, 2007** in the Wintergarden Conference Center at West Penn Hospital (1st floor, across from the cafeteria) at **6:30 pm**. The topic will be **Patient Stories**. If you have had your surgery and would be interested in speaking, please contact Julie. 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!

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, May 17, 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.

New Info Sessions

On **May 9**, there will be an informational session at **Cannonsburg Hospital at 6:30 pm** in the McNary Conference Center. The speaker will be Dr. Gagné. On **May 10**, there will be another one at the **Destination Wellness Center at Pittsburgh Mills** near Alle-Kiski Medical Center at 6:00 pm. The speaker will be Dr. Papasavas. Please encourage friends, family, co-workers, and whoever may be interested in weight loss surgery to attend one of these.

Patient Feature

Name: Tina K.

Date of Surgery: 4-13-06

Pounds lost: 131

Best thing about weight loss:

"The best thing is how I got all of my energy back, and of course, being healthy. I almost feel like a kid again."

Most surprising insight: "I bought a skirt before the surgery thinking that I could fit into it later, but when I put it on, it fell off of me."

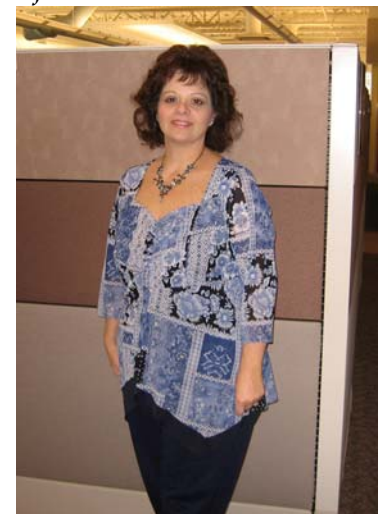
Comment: "This was the best decision that I ever made besides marrying my

husband. I highly recommend it to anybody."

Before



After



Nutrition Note

The Role of B12

What is B12?

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B12 is an essential B-vitamin. It's called essential because your body doesn't make it, or make enough of it, on its own, so you have to get it from the food you eat.

What does it do?

B12 acts as a coenzyme in 3 enzymatic reactions that take place in your body. One of these reactions is the conversion of homocysteine to methionine. Methionine is needed to maintain the myelin sheath around our nerves. A byproduct of this reaction is free folate, another essential B-vitamin. B12 also acts as a coenzyme in the conversion of L-methylmalonyl CoA to succinyl CoA, which is required for making hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is what carries oxygen in your red blood cells.

What foods are high in B12?

The best food sources of B12 are meats, poultry, fish/shellfish, milk and milk products.

Why do I have to take B12 supplements after gastric bypass surgery? Why can't I get enough B12 in the food I eat?

Because of the nature of the surgery, you cannot digest B12 after having gastric bypass surgery. Therefore, your body isn't absorbing the B12 from the food that you're eating or the vitamins you're taking.

What happens if I become B12 deficient?

B12 deficiency causes a type of anemia called pernicious anemia. It can also cause neuropathy. If there isn't enough methionine to maintain the myelin sheath around the nerve cells, then the nerves cannot function normally. Symptoms of neuropathy can include numbness and/or tingling in the hands and feet. Finally, B12 deficiency can lead to high levels of homocysteine in the blood, which is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

How am I going to get enough B12 after surgery?

There are two ways to get your B12 after gastric bypass surgery: 1) a monthly B12 injection, or 2) sublingual B12, which dissolves under your tongue. If you choose to have a monthly B12 shot, your doctor will give you a prescription for this. Sublingual B12 can be bought over-the-counter at a pharmacy or drug store. A 500mcg dose everyday should be sufficient.

Tips from Dr. Tom

Renew your self...Attend the post-op support group Happy Spring! It is a time for renewal. It is time to shake off the winter doldrums and try new things. Renewal was one of the themes that was

discussed in the last post-op support group.

If you have not been there yet, it's time to attend. The 12 patients and family members who joined us for the meeting on 4-19-07, spoke about what a valuable experience it was for them. Patients and their loved ones, (spouses and parents) had the opportunity to share their experiences coping with the myriad of changes that occurred after their surgery. They related how the changes went beyond the physical difference that came with the weight loss. They described many differences in their personal and professional lives. They said that people treated them differently and sometimes they felt that was a good thing while other times they described feeling resentful that it took weight loss for some people to recognize them for who they really are. A few patients talked about coping with surgical complications including, problems digesting some foods and needing treatment for minor infections. Others spoke about the emotional challenges of accepting themselves as the "new person" they had become. It was important for them to be seen clearly by others and to see themselves clearly as well. They also spoke about the social aspects of the change they had experienced. They

described how some relationships had improved while others became more complicated and how sometimes they even made decisions to end relationships they felt were no longer healthy to be a part of. All of them said they, "would do it again in heartbeat." Even with the challenges of learning new ways to be and to cope, they described the surgery as one of the best things they had ever done.

If you can relate to any of their experiences or any of the themes discussed, I want to encourage you to take advantage of this most helpful and fulfilling group experience. See you there!

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.