

Interview with Dr. Sasse

QUESTION

What are the risks of outpatient weight loss surgery?

ANSWER

The risks of outpatient weight loss surgery include potential problems with surgery, with anesthesia, and with the health conditions that a person has before they come in for surgery. The surgeries involve a laparoscopy, so there are five small ½ inch incisions made in the abdomen and the potential exists for complications such as infection or bleeding. Problems with anesthesia are rare, but sometimes people who are seriously overweight may have increased risk of breathing difficulties after emerging from anesthesia. There is a small risk, usually less than 1% in the hands of an experienced surgeon, that the procedure would have to be performed with an open technique, meaning a standard long abdominal incision would be required. There are also rare but potentially serious risks that are unique to the outpatient setting. Because people go home more rapidly than was historically the case, it is possible that some complications or problems may come to light after a person is home. These can run the gamut from infections to nausea or other side effects of medications, and blockages or problems with surgery that was performed. Studies show us that fewer people require hospital admission or return for admission after their surgery is performed in an outpatient setting than when it is performed in a hospital setting. Nevertheless, it is very important for people undergoing outpatient weight loss surgery to feel comfortable that they can contact the surgeon or his nursing staff to communicate any problems they feel they may be having after they have arrived at home.

QUESTION

So where do you see the future of weight loss surgery going?

ANSWER

That's really a great question. I see the future of weight loss surgery building upon the movement over the last decade toward less invasive but also more effective surgical interventions. We have seen that the skill level of trained bariatric surgeons has increased through the roof. Increasingly complex technical procedures can be performed with a minimally invasive technique in the hands of the right doctors. I see the future bringing more and more highly skilled specialists to this field who can bring the less invasive techniques to more people. The American Society of Bariatric Surgery predicts continued growth of weight loss surgery and I frankly think the estimate of 320,000 or so cases in the year 2010 is probably an underestimate. I think the future is going to bring far more cases to the outpatient surgery arena. The Lap Band in particular is very well suited to an outpatient surgical approach and I think we are going to continue to see growth of outpatient surgical centers, outpatient weight loss surgery programs, and increasing growth in the Lap Band nationally and worldwide. We will also, I believe, see more people undergoing Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery or see gastrectomy type procedures in the outpatient setting, but these will be performed in far fewer numbers than the Lap Band procedure.

QUESTION

Where do you see the future of medical weight loss intervention?

ANSWER

The future for nonsurgical treatments for obesity and overweight is very bright, I believe. There is a heightened focus on this subject among the medical and scientific community. There is a great deal of research money and attention being given to the obesity epidemic. Physicians and organizations, such as the American Society of Bariatric Physicians, are increasing their dedication to finding comprehensive weight loss solutions that are successful. We are seeing multidisciplinary programs that involve a combination of behavior modification, exercise, meal replacement diet plans, and prescription medication come into use with increasing success. It definitely requires a concerted and integrated approach to fight this disease and I think we are seeing real progress on all fronts in the medical treatment of overweight and obesity.