

## Too Fat For Anesthesia?

Published on Surgical Products (<http://www.surgicalproductsmag.com>)

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At first it sounds like the start of one of those offensive “fat” jokes obese people hate so much: “How fat was he? So fat the surgeons need suction cups to lift his belly.”

But this is no joke. A team of Rice University bioengineering students, responding to an urgent request from heart surgeon Mehdi Razavi, has developed a device that can lift the abdomen of an obese patient undergoing surgery so the patient can breathe.

Razavi, an electrophysiologist who specializes in implanting pacemakers and performs heart catheterizations, often places his patients under “conscious sedation,” a light anesthesia, because if the patient were simply knocked out, with a tube down his or her throat, and a machine doing the breathing, there’d be a greater risk of complications. But during one surgery on an obese man, Razavi realized his patient was snoring and having trouble breathing. The man’s oxygen levels were dropping.

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