Benefits Of Bariatric Surgery Validated

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A computerized model suggests that most morbidly obese individuals would likely live longer if they had gastric bypass surgery. However, the best decision for individual patients varies based on age, increasing body mass index and the effectiveness of surgery.

An estimated 5.1 percent of the U.S. population is morbidly obese, with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher. Available evidence suggests that dietary, behavioral and pharmacologic treatments frequently fail to result in meaningful weight loss for individuals in this group. Bariatric surgery appears to be the only effective therapy for promoting clinically significant weight loss and improving obesity-related health conditions for the morbidly obese.

The procedure is not without risk, however, including in-hospital death. Daniel P. Schauer, M.D., M.Sc., at the University of Cincinnati, and colleagues, used two nationally representative surveys and a recent large observational trial to construct a model estimating the benefits and risks of gastric bypass surgery.

The model included data from almost 400,000 individuals nationwide to estimate the risk of death from obesity and its complications, data from 23,281 patients undergoing bariatric surgery to calculate in-hospital death rates, and outcomes from participants in a seven-year study to determine the effects of surgery on survival.

According to the resulting model, an average 42-year-old woman with a BMI of 45 would gain an estimated additional three years of life expectancy as a result of undergoing bariatric surgery. A 44-year-old man with the same BMI would gain an estimated 2.6 additional years.

Younger women with higher BMIs are projected to gain the most life expectancy from surgery. Younger men with higher BMIs might also gain more life expectancy after surgery, but the gain would be less for men than for women in each subgroup.

SOURCE: *Archives of Surgery*, January 2010

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