

# The Path

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Jessica Johnson before having an adjustable gastric band surgically implanted.



Jessica Johnson and her husband celebrate Jessica's weight loss and improved health.

## A Different Weight Loss Option Leads to a Different Life

**By Jessica Johnson  
Adjustable Gastric Band Patient**

■ If you had asked me a year-and-a-half ago if I thought I'd be writing this, I would have said, NEVER. I did not think bariatric surgery was a path I would take, but I'm very glad I did.

My weight bounced around quite a bit while I was growing up. I was normally 25 to 30 pounds overweight, sometimes more. Then something would happen and the extra weight would just drop off. After I got married, I started steadily gaining. I tried Weight Watchers and various other diets, and was a regular at the gym with no results. My doctors seemed perplexed by the weight gain and even suggested I try a few different diet pills. I would drop 20 pounds, stall, and then eventually regain the weight plus some.

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## Support Groups and Office Hours

**Post-Op Support Groups:** First Monday of every month from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Medical Education Auditorium at Memorial Health.

**Pre- and Post-Op Support Groups:** Third Wednesday of every month from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Medical Education Auditorium following the Wednesday night information sessions.

**Information Sessions:** Third Thursday of every month from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Ogeechee Technical College in Statesboro, and every Wednesday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Medical Education Auditorium at Memorial Health.

**Hours of Operation:** Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed for lunch 12 noon to 1 p.m.), Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Tuesday and Friday mornings from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon are reserved for patient weigh-ins and vitamin purchases.



Memorial Health

# Bariatrics

Help is here.

bariatrics.memorialhealth.com 912-350-DIET (3438)

# Staying on Track

**By Glenda Sasser, MSN, Nurse Practitioner  
Manager of Outpatient Services at Memorial Health Bariatrics**

■ It's the little day-to-day things that help us stay on track. Keep your long-term goals in mind and make small, daily improvements. Stay inspired and encourage others with these simple tips:

- Be positive. A positive attitude wards off fear.
- Share your experiences and offer support. You will motivate yourself and others.
- Rekindle old relationships and take time to nurture each relationship.
- When cooking, make healthy changes in your favorite recipes. Use homemade dressings and whole grain products.
- Drink up. Pure water and green tea are both excellent antioxidants.
- Just breathe. Fresh air improves mental and physical functioning.
- Stand up straight. Good posture encourages lung expansion and ventilation.
- Smile, it's contagious.

You can do it. Stay on track, stay the course, and be a success story. 🌟



## Don't Forget Your Vitamins

**By John Angstadt, M.D.  
Bariatric Surgeon**

■ Following gastric bypass surgery, all patients are required to take supplemental vitamins. This is a crucial part of the recovery and weight-loss process. Vitamins are substances that our bodies need to speed along chemical reactions. They play diverse rolls in metabolism, nerve conduction, and muscle function. Vitamin deficiencies can have specific, and sometimes devastating, consequences.

When you eat, food enters your stomach and mixes with gastric acid. Food exits the stomach and picks up digestive enzymes in the first part of bowel. In this first portion of bowel, a substance called intrinsic factor is released that substantially increases vitamin B-12 absorption in the distal bowel. In the first eight inches of bowel, you absorb folate and thiamine. As the food, mixed with acid and digestive enzymes, moves through your bowel, you absorb the vitamins you need.

After bypass surgery, 95 percent of your stomach is excluded from seeing food. As a result, there is a lot less acid in your intestinal tract. In addition, the area where intrinsic factor is released and folate and thiamine are absorbed is now bypassed. These vitamins can no longer be absorbed normally.

Your body absorbs calcium and iron best in an acid environment. After bypass surgery, the acidity of your intestinal environment is substantially reduced. You will not absorb calcium or iron as readily and will usually need supplements. If you do not take calcium, your body will pull it out of your bones to keep the blood level up. We see this movement in an elevation of the parathormone level in the blood. In addition, some patients not taking calcium notice a tapering off of their weight loss or even weight re-gain. If your iron level gets low, we notice anemia or low blood count when your blood work is checked.

If your folate level gets low, you will develop a low blood count as well. However, if your vitamin B-12 or thiamine levels get too low, you may get numbness, pain, or weakness in your lower extremities. Untreated, this can progress to difficulty with walking or balance. If we catch these symptoms in time, we can completely correct the deficiency. However, in some cases these changes cannot be reversed and there may be permanent nerve damage. Patients taking supplemental vitamins do not experience these problems.

Vitamins are critical for normal body functions. Taking vitamins is a small thing you should do to help you reap big benefits. Stay healthy— take your vitamins. 🌟

Last year was a turning point for me. At 260 pounds, I was heavier than I had ever been. My grandfather, with whom I had always been very close, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I spent a lot of time caring for my grandfather until he passed away. My father and grandmother were there too, and they are also morbidly obese. During that time, something clicked. I could see the health problems and difficulties in daily life that I would end up with if I did not take control and make some changes. I knew I had to do something. I was 28 years old and I didn't want to turn 30 in the same or worse condition.

I didn't know what to do or how to take control of my life until I had to make an unexpected appointment to see my doctor. My regular doctor was out of town that day so I saw a new physician. The new physician asked if I had ever considered gastric bypass surgery. I told her that I had, in fact, thought about it and decided that it was not for me.

My grandmother had Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery some years ago. Sadly, she was not the ideal patient and regained all of the 70 lbs she had lost and then some. I knew that the required lifestyle changes were too drastic for me and that I couldn't take the risks associated with that procedure.

I had heard about the adjustable lap band and told the doctor that it was the only surgical option I would even begin to consider. I really didn't take the idea of surgery seriously at that time, but the doctor referred me to an information session at Memorial Health Bariatrics. My husband and I attended, fully expecting to be convinced that this was not the option for me.

It turns out we were both wrong. After listening to the statistics, we agreed that the lap band really seemed like a viable choice. I spent the next few weeks doing more research, and "living" with the possibility in my head. In the end, there didn't seem to be any reason not to do it. I set up the necessary appointments and things began moving along quickly. I received a lap band on February 7, 2006.

Since that date, I have dropped 74 pounds. My body mass index (BMI) has dropped nearly 13 points. One more pound lost and I will no longer be considered obese, just slightly overweight. I cannot even begin to explain how thrilled I was when at my one-month post-operative appointment, I was at a weight that no longer even qualified for surgery!

The band has been wonderful. I can eat what I want to although I do follow the prescribed diet most of the time. We have even taken a few trips this year and it is great being able to have a small dessert with a special meal and still see my weight dropping. I've had three band adjustments so far and haven't had a single problem with them. In many ways, this has been the easiest thing I have ever done to lose weight.

There is a lot of work involved in making sure I get my water, keep my diet "clean" most of the time, and keep up on the exercise. I tend to do well, but if I get out of the routine, I have to quickly get myself back on track. Still, the changes in my body and my life have been amazing and I would not trade this experience for anything! 🍷



## Dealing With Band Slippage

By **Oliver Whipple, M.D.**  
**Bariatric Surgeon**

■ Adjustable gastric band slippage is an issue that must be monitored long after the surgery is over. If you experience band slippage, you may first notice a change in the way you feel. You may experience nausea followed by pain in the middle or upper part of the abdomen. You might think it was something you ate, but it does not get better. Instead, the feelings become more consistent.

What should you do? The answer is simple: call us, call us, call us. We will quickly evaluate your band in a method very similar to an adjustment. If the band is no longer oriented in an oblique direction, and it is now horizontal with too much stomach above it, the band has slipped.

We will first take all of the fluid out of the band. If the band does not correct itself, we must proceed to the operating room to remove the band or reduce the excess stomach below the band and suture it back into place. The chance of any of this happening is only 2 percent, but it's important for band recipients to be aware of the symptoms and act quickly if they occur. 🍷

**Save the Date**

**Memorial Health  
Bariatrics Gala**

**August 25, 2007**

**More details will be coming soon.**

## Just Right Chili

- 1/2 Pound ground beef**
- 1/2 Pound ground pork**
- 2 Teaspoons garlic, chopped**
- 1/2 Bunch scallion onions, chopped**
- 14 Ounces tomato sauce**
- 14 Ounces diced tomatoes, drained**
- 2 Teaspoons chili powder**
- 1 Teaspoon cumin**
- 1/2 Teaspoon black pepper**
- 1 can pinto beans**

Place ground beef and pork into a medium pot and sauté for five minutes. Drain fat. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer. Let simmer for 20 minutes and enjoy. Serves 4