



**Photo:** Ira Harper two months before gastric bypass surgery.



**Photo:** Six months after surgery, Ira Harper is 110 pounds lighter.

## The 'Weigh' I Was: My Journey to Improvement

**By Ira Harper**  
**Gastric Bypass Surgery Patient**

■ I am an I.T. Specialist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Savannah. When I had gastric bypass surgery on October 28, 2005, I weighed 343 pounds.

I've had a weight problem for years and my health was being affected more and more. I could not walk any distance without constant pain in my knees. I had high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high triglycerides, obstructive sleep apnea, and I was borderline diabetic. I knew I had to do something if I wanted to be around for my grandchildren.

I was a good candidate for gastric bypass surgery. I had tried all of the traditional dieting methods, but nothing worked. I had lifetime memberships in weight-loss programs, but I would always regain all of the weight I lost. It didn't take much for me to gain, because my metabolism had slowed to almost nothing. Although I did not eat

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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.



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## ADDING CARBOHYDRATES BACK INTO YOUR DIET



By Helen Hussey, R.D.

■ When it's time to add carbohydrates back into your diet, natural complex carbohydrates are best. Complex carbohydrates are broken down into glucose more slowly than simple carbohydrates and provide a

gradual, steady stream of energy throughout the day.

All carbohydrates are broken down into glucose to produce the energy molecule adenosinetriphosphate (ATP). The efficiency of this breakdown process also depends on vitamins and minerals contained in a carbohydrate source. Most natural complex carbohydrate sources contain many of the vitamins and minerals needed for energy production. Simple, refined carbohydrates found in many processed foods are devoid of these important natural nutrients. This is why they pose a greater risk that some of the energy supplied by them will be converted into fat and stored. Natural complex carbohydrates are also often devoid of additives and preservatives found in many of the processed simple carbohydrate sources.

The list below includes natural complex carbohydrate foods that are frequently used to produce food products or meals. Most foods or products that contain a large portion of these staple ingredients are good complex carbohydrate sources. The best way to provide the diet with complex carbohydrates is to consume foods in their most natural state.

- Bran
- Wheatgerm
- Barley
- Maize
- Buckwheat
- Cornmeal
- Oatmeal

—continued from cover, *The 'Weigh' I was: My Journey to Improvement*

a lot, the things that I ate weren't good for me. My body retained everything.

My wife was very concerned about the risks, complications, and side effects of the surgery, but I felt it was a decision I had to make for myself. She was afraid that something would happen and I wouldn't be around anymore. But, I couldn't be talked out of it. I knew that my health was declining rapidly and that without the surgery I may not live long. My wife understood my fears and agreed with my plan.

I found the pre-operation process to be very thorough. The doctors put me through a lot to make sure this was the right option for me.

I was lucky that I had no complications or pain after the surgery. I returned to work within two weeks.

Six months after gastric bypass surgery, I was 110 pounds lighter. My cholesterol was within the normal range. My sleep apnea was gone and my blood pressure was only slightly elevated. I was participating in a moderate exercise program.

Most of my friends didn't recognize me.

Obesity is more than just a physical problem. It leaves emotional scars too. Now that my weight is dropping, my confidence, self esteem, and social skills are improving. Before surgery, I was very introverted and preferred to stay confined in my private life. Now, that's changing. I have a renewed interest and outlook on life.

It is great to feel better and find my energy level increasing each day. The idea of wearing smaller clothes is something I am getting used to. The compliments flow in and are very reinforcing. Before surgery, during my various diet attempts, when people would say that I looked great I would tell myself that it meant I could go back and eat some pizza again. Now when people say I look great, I say, "Thanks!"

I am realizing the importance of achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle and overall well-being. I feel like this is the best thing that I've done for myself and I only wish I had done it sooner. I spent too much time sitting on the sidelines, but now I am a participant in life.

I often remind people that gastric bypass surgery is not a cure. It's a tool to use to reach your goal. If you make the decision to have gastric bypass surgery, do it for yourself. If you feel good at the weight that you are, stay that way. It's all about being happy with who you are. In order to succeed, you have to be willing to change your habits. You have to be willing to learn new things, eat a balanced diet, and maintain portion control. It's a big change, but for me, it has been well worth it. 🍌

# Reducing the Risk and Cost of Obesity-Related Diseases

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



■ At Memorial Health Bariatrics, when we talk about “comorbidities,” we’re referring to various health conditions that are related to excessive weight. The more you weigh, the greater your risk of acquiring one or more life-threatening comorbid conditions. Obesity-related comorbidities are numerous

and involve virtually every body system (see sidebar). Without significant weight loss to correct the underlying biochemical abnormalities, patients and physicians become engaged in a difficult, costly, and often frustrating cycle as they try to control comorbidities.

Bariatric surgery is now proven to resolve or dramatically improve these comorbidities. It is now known that bariatric surgery simultaneously treats more disease conditions than any other single medical or surgical treatment.

At Memorial Health Bariatrics, we currently perform laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass in 75 percent of our patients and laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding in the remaining 25 percent. We’ve experienced excellent success rates with both procedures not only in weight loss, but also in the improvement of obesity-related comorbidities.

## The Financial Toll of Obesity

In addition to pain, suffering, and illness, morbid obesity is associated with high economic costs. Most of these costs are related to the ongoing management of chronic comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates these costs to be nearly \$120 billion a year. Consider the cost of medications to treat hypertension and diabetes. The calculated savings on medication equals the cost of surgery at 32 months post-operatively.

Studies have shown that the cost of bariatric surgery is offset by a reduction in total healthcare costs in three-and-a-half years. By five years, there is a nearly 30 percent reduction in healthcare costs for patients who have bariatric surgery.

Bariatric surgery currently is the only effective method we have to achieve long-term weight loss in severely obese patients. In appropriately selected patients, the result is long-term improvement in all obesity-related comorbidities, extended life expectancy, and meaningful reduction in healthcare costs. 🌸

## Comorbidities Associated with Obesity

### Cardiovascular

- Coronary artery disease
- Congestive heart failure
- Hypertension
- Left ventricular hypertrophy
- Venous stasis ulcers/thrombophlebitis
- Hyperlipidemia

### Pulmonary

- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Obesity hypoventilation syndrome
- Asthma

### Endocrine

- Insulin resistance
- Type 2 diabetes
- Polycystic ovarian syndrome

### Hematopoietic

- Deep venous thrombosis
- Pulmonary embolism

### Gastrointestinal/Hepatobiliary

- Gastroesophageal reflux disease
- Abdominal hernia
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver tissue
- Gallstones

### Genitourinary

- Stress urinary incontinence
- Urinary tract infections

### Obstetric/Gynecologic

- Infertility
- Miscarriage
- Fetal abnormalities and infant mortality
- Gestational diabetes

### Musculoskeletal

- Degenerative joint disease
- Gout
- Plantar Fasciitis
- Carpal tunnel syndrome

### Neurologic/Psychiatric

- Stroke
- Pseudotumor cerebri
- Depression
- Anxiety

# Refreshing Summer Recipes

## Watermelon Salad

This luscious salad combines watermelon with mint and scallions in raspberry vinaigrette. It goes great with fresh grilled salmon. This recipe serves eight.

- 2c. Watermelon, seeded and cubed
  - 2 tsp. Mint, chopped
  - 1/4 c. Scallions, chopped
  - 2 Kiwi fruit, peeled and cubed
  - 1/4 c. Fresh lemon juice
  - 1/4 c. Raspberry vinegar
  - 3 Tbsp. Splenda
  - Salt and pepper, to taste
1. Place all ingredients into a large mixing bowl and toss lightly. Refrigerate for four hours to allow flavors to blend.

## Chicken Boursin

This flavorful main course serves four.

- 6 Large boneless skinless chicken breasts, pounded thin
  - 6 oz. Boursin cheese
  - 6 Tbsp. Pignoli
  - 1 Tbsp. Granulated garlic
  - 1 Tbsp. Salt
  - 1 Tbsp. Black pepper
1. Season pounded chicken breasts on both sides with salt, pepper, and garlic.
  2. Smear 1 ounce of Boursin cheese over one side of seasoned chicken breasts.
  3. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp. of pignoli (pine nuts) over cheese. Roll chicken breast up and tuck ends under.
  4. Bake in preheated oven at 350 degrees for 35 to 45 minutes.

## Stuffed Tomatoes

With large, plump tomatoes, this recipe can serve six people.

- 3 Large ripe tomatoes
  - 2 tsp. Salt, approximately
  - 2 Large cloves garlic, finely chopped
  - 1/4 c. Green onions, finely chopped
  - 1 tsp. Fresh thyme, chopped
  - 1/2 tsp. Salt
  - 1 Tbsp. Fresh basil, chopped
  - 1/2 tsp. Pepper
  - 1/2 c. Parmesan cheese, grated
  - 1 Tbsp. Olive oil
1. Cut tomatoes in half, seed and press out the juices, but do not mash.
  2. Sprinkle the halves with salt, then turn upside down on a wire cooling rack and let them drain for 10 minutes.
  3. Combine the rest of the ingredients, except the oil, to make the stuffing.



4. Fill the tomato halves with stuffing and sprinkle with olive oil. Place in a prepared baking dish.
5. Bake at 400 degrees for about 10 minutes or until tops are browned, but tomatoes are not too soft.