

# Pre-surgical Psychological Evaluation



Bariatric surgery is a powerful tool in the treatment of obesity. Compared to other weight loss treatments, surgical intervention results in greater weight loss and increased likelihood of successful weight maintenance. However, surgery is a life-changing event, and success can be affected by psychological issues or life stressors. As a result, undergoing a pre-surgical psychological evaluation is the standard of care. The purpose is to make sure there are no serious mental health conditions that contraindicate surgery. The evaluation also will help patients develop a plan to address smaller issues so that they can have the best chance for weight loss success and an improved quality of life.

## What can I expect regarding the requirement for behavioral health approval?

Nationally, three out of four people are recommended without delay for surgery. The others are usually advised to undergo behavioral health treatment to address existing issues that could negatively impact bariatric surgery success. These issues include substance abuse, eating disorders, unstable mood disorders or major life stressors. Most people who follow the recommendations and seek treatment go on to be re-evaluated and are cleared for bariatric surgery.

It is in your best interest to address issues related to your mental and emotional health before surgery. Mental health conditions that are not well managed are associated with less success after surgery.

## What happens in the psychological evaluation?

The evaluations occur over two to three sessions with a licensed psychologist.

Session 1 - Objective Testing: You will complete paper and pencil behavioral health screenings and at least one computer-based personality and behavioral assessment. (1-2 hours)

Session 2 - Psychological Interview: The psychologist will ask about a range of subject areas (weight history, psychiatric history, substance use, current life stressors) and assess your level of motivation and knowledge about bariatric surgery. (1-1.5 hours)

Session 3 - Feedback: You will receive information as to whether or not you cleared behavioral health completely or if the psychologist has additional requirements, such as behavioral health treatment to address an issue that otherwise would likely interfere with a successful outcome. Rarely is a person told that he or she will never be an appropriate candidate. (30 minutes)

## What can I do to prepare for the psychological evaluation?

Be yourself! Honesty is appreciated and required. The behavioral health providers have your best interests at heart, and you are in a safe and confidential environment.

Educate yourself! Motivation plays a big role in outcome. The more educated you are about post-operative diet and lifestyle changes, the more you truly understand what it takes to be successful with bariatric surgery.