



Marc Bessler, MD

Letter from the Director

June 2018

Dear Reader,

As the warm summer weather approaches, this is a good time to think about fighting obesity with diet, exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

Many people don't recognize how obesity is slowly chipping away at their health. This is because, like cancer, the health effects of obesity may not become clear until some of the damage is already done and the consequences of disease are plain to see. It's important to learn about how obesity can affect your health and the many medical conditions it can lead to. In this issue, [Dr. Abraham Krikhely](#) talks about some of these conditions, and the impact that weight loss surgery can have in treating them. Please see our Q&A below.

In the meantime, here are some studies that help explain why maintaining a healthy weight is so important.

New [research](#) shows that obese people don't live as long as their normal weight peers—or even as long as those who are simply overweight. What's more, obesity means more years living with heart disease.

Researchers at Northwestern University looked at the data on more than 190,000 adults from 10 different U.S. studies over 70 years, considering weight and other factors linked to the risk of heart disease. Obese middle-aged men were 67 percent more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, heart failure or cardiovascular death. Obese women had 85 percent higher risk compared to those at normal-weight.

Extremely obese middle-aged men had almost triple the risk of having a heart condition or dying from it, compared with normal-weight men, and extremely obese middle-aged women had more than twice the risk of normal-weight women.

While overweight men had a similar lifespan to normal weight men, obese men lived 1.9 fewer years, and extremely obese men died an average of six years sooner.

The good news is that weight loss surgery is a very cost-effective way of addressing medical complications associated with obesity (*News-Medical*), while producing longer life-expectancy and better quality of life. Read more below about this recent study in the [*British Journal of Surgery*](#).

And yet another [study](#) shows that bariatric patients lose more weight when they come for their regular follow-up visits (*Healio | Gastroenterology*).

To good health,

Marc Bessler, MD, FACS

Director, The Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery

www.columbiasurgery.org/weight-loss

Bariatric Surgery Reduces Risk of Cancer, Diabetes and Heart Disease

Obesity affects many different organs in the body and is linked with many different medical problems. According to a recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 40% of adult Americans are obese. This figure is alarming not just because it is high, but also because so much effort has gone into promoting health and wellness and increasing awareness of the consequences of obesity – yet that number has continued to climb.

“We are seeing a good deal of cancer, diabetes and heart disease in obese patients,” says [Dr. Abraham Krikhely](#), a bariatric surgeon at Columbia’s Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery. “Yet weight loss surgery can reduce their risk for these diseases, and help them to live longer, fuller lives.”

In the Q&A below, Dr. Krikhely describes the conditions associated with obesity, then tells how bariatric surgery can reverse, or significantly reduce, them.

[Read more](#)

To schedule an appointment, please call 212.305.4000.

Advances in Bariatric Surgery for Adolescents

In September 2017, the Center for Adolescent Bariatric Surgery at NYP/Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital was accredited by the American College of Surgeons MBSA QIP as a comprehensive site for treating young patients with severe obesity.

"Our Center is the sixth program nationwide, and the only one in New York State, to receive this distinction," says [Jeffrey Zitsman, MD](#), founder and Director of the Center. Experts at NYP's Center for Adolescent Bariatric surgery were among the first in New York State to offer weight loss surgery to teens and since then, they have operated on roughly 350 patients ranging in age from 9 to 19.

"Research continues to support weight loss as the most practical means of treating severe obesity in this age group. Hundreds of patients nationwide have now benefitted from this surgery, and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery is revising its guidelines in recognition of the need to give teenagers better access to treatment," says Dr. Zitsman. "There are thousands of adolescents with severe obesity whose best option for weight loss is surgery."

[Read more](#)

Can You Be Obese and Perfectly Healthy? Study Says No

Obese individuals have a higher risk for developing serious health problems later in life, even if they're healthy now, according to a study in the May issue of the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

Researchers looked at 6,809 participants with what is known as metabolically healthy obesity, or MHO. MHO means having a BMI greater than 30 and having two or fewer risk factors for metabolic syndrome—high blood pressure; high blood sugar; unhealthy cholesterol levels; and abdominal fat.

The study showed a link between MHO and likelihood of developing metabolic syndrome. Nearly half of the study participants developed metabolic syndrome over the course of the study.

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Obesity Increases Cancer Risk for Young Adults

As obesity is rising among younger people, so are cancer rates. Researchers now report that obesity increases the risk of 13 different cancers in young adults.

Cancers typically associated with adults over 50 are now reported with increasing frequency in this younger age group. Of the 20 most common cancers in the United States, nine are now recorded in young adults. In 2016, nearly 1 in 10 new breast cancer cases, and 1 in 4 new thyroid cancer cases occurred in those aged 20-44, according to the review published in *Obesity*.

Obesity can permanently alter a young person's likelihood of developing cancer. Even after losing weight, cancer risk remains. Why? Obesity causes changes to DNA over time that increase cancer risk. This may spark cellular changes that persist long after weight loss.

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Chevy Chase Sheds 110 Pounds After Weight Loss Surgery

Chevy Chase, known for his roles in the movie *National Lampoon* and on *Saturday Night Live*, has reportedly lost 110 pounds after undergoing gastric bypass surgery. Chase once weighed 300 pounds, but through a combination of surgery and a solid rehabilitation program, lost more than a third of his total body weight.

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Rise in Divorces AND Marriages after Bariatric Surgery

Psychological counseling can be important after weight loss surgery. Why? Personal relationships tend to change after bariatric surgery, according to a study published in *JAMA Surgery*.

Those who were married or living with a partner at the time of surgery were more likely to undergo divorce and separation ten years later than obese individuals who did not have the surgery.

Yet people who weren't in a relationship when they underwent surgery were more likely to get married or start a new relationship in the months after surgery.

Researchers believe that weight loss surgeries result “in a re-calibration of relationships,” as patients recognize they can get out of unhappy relationships and build new ones.

[Read more](#)

Weight-Loss Surgery is Cost Effective

A new study in *The British Journal of Surgery* indicates that weight-loss surgery is cost-effective over 10 years and can save healthcare systems money over a lifetime. Researchers used a decision-analytic model to come to their conclusion.

[Read more](#)

The [Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery](#) has offices in several convenient locations in the tri-state area. [You can make an appointment here.](#)



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