

Alcohol After Weight Loss Surgery

Patients are often discouraged from consuming alcohol for up to a year following bariatric surgery for several reasons. Not only is alcohol a source of empty calories, increasing your overall calorie intake, thereby jeopardizing your ultimate weight loss goals, but it also decreases the absorption of many vitamins and minerals, contributing to deficiency syndromes. Alcohol consumption increases the risk of gastric ulcers, making you more susceptible to acid reflux.

Recently, researchers have reported that bariatric surgery alters alcohol metabolism thereby increasing alcohol sensitivity. This is because the factors that affect it including body weight, liver function, food intake, and transit time in the stomach, are all altered by the surgical procedure.

The mechanism of this is really very simple. As bariatric surgery reduces the size of the stomach and reduces its transit time, there is decreased alcohol breakdown by the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase. The absorption by the intestine therefore is higher and more rapid, which effectively translates into higher blood levels of alcohol. Studies have shown that blood alcohol levels of gastric bypass patients were 50% higher than in subjects who had not undergone surgery.

Researchers found that the patients who had undergone bariatric surgery had a higher peak breath alcohol level (0.08 %) as compared to the control group (0.05%), and that the former group took almost 40 minutes longer to completely metabolize the alcohol (time to zero being 108 versus 72 minutes). Also, they reported that the age and weight adjusted breath alcohol curves showed significantly higher levels at each time point for the gastric bypass patients on serial analysis after drinking 5 ounces of red wine over a 15 minute period.

This implies that you need less alcohol to become intoxicated. In fact, even one glass of wine at dinner can mean that your blood alcohol level is over the legal limit, and can have serious implications as far as your ability to concentrate is concerned. Experts are of the view that even one glass of wine may be too much for post bariatric surgery patients, with two being the outer limit.

Psychologists also describe a disorder termed as addiction transfer. A patient, following treatment for substance abuse, swaps one compulsive behavior addiction for another. Statistics from substance abuse centers show that patients who stop overeating often acquire new compulsive disorders such as alcoholism and gambling.

Researchers have brought to light preliminary data suggesting that as many as 20 to 30 percent of bariatric surgery patients struggle with new addictions. There is however no conclusive data as alcoholism can be detected several years after the surgery. In such cases, the patients are no longer under the regular follow up by their weight loss team, and more often than not patients also do not attribute their alcohol addiction to their surgery, thereby failing to mention it to their counselors.

Off course, there are chances that the addiction maybe purely coincidental. It is however advisable to err on the side of caution as far as alcohol after bariatric surgery is concerned.

Alma Orozco is a certified patient coordinator of the Ready4Achange team for <http://www.ready4achange.com> . Monterrey is rated as the safest city in Latin America and the medical facilities out there are certified by US hospitals. The low cost of living makes surgery very affordable in Mexico. You can check out <http://ready4achange.com/gastric-sleeve-surgery-mexico> done by Dr Zapata at CIMA Monterrey by clicking on the link.