

# Study: Obesity surgery can help prevent diabetes

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Doctors are reporting a new benefit from weight-loss surgery — preventing diabetes. Far fewer obese people developed that disease if they had stomach-shrinking operations rather than usual care to try to slim down, a large study in Sweden found.

The results, published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine, are provoking fresh debate about when adjustable bands and other bariatric procedures should be offered.

It is "provocative and exciting" that surgery can prevent [diabetes](#), but it is "impractical and unjustified" to think of doing it on millions of obese adults, Dr. Danny Jacobs, a Duke University surgeon, wrote in a commentary in the medical journal.

Dr. Mitchell Roslin, bariatric surgery chief at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, disagreed.

"If surgery is the only treatment we have, we have to accept the cost ramifications of that" and give up "the naive notion" that we can just teach severely obese people how to lose weight, said Roslin, who consults for some makers of bariatric surgery equipment.

Millions of Americans have Type 2 diabetes brought on by obesity. Earlier this year, two studies showed that obesity surgery can reverse diabetes and keep it away for many years, possibly for good.

The new study went a step further, to see if it could prevent diabetes in the first place among people who are obese.

Researchers led by Dr. Lars Sjöström of Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Gothenburg, Sweden, tracked 1,658 patients who had bariatric surgery — mostly bands and stomach stapling — and 1,771 similar patients who just got usual care and counseling on how to lose weight.

None had diabetes when the study began. After about 10 years on average among those still in the study, 392 developed diabetes in the usual care group versus 110 in the surgery group. Researchers calculated that surgery had reduced the odds of getting diabetes by 78 percent.

That is "absolutely remarkable," said Dr. Philip Schauer, a Cleveland Clinic surgeon who also has consulted for some surgery equipment makers and thinks surgery should be used more often for obesity.

[Weight-loss surgery](#) costs \$15,000 to \$25,000. Proponents note that complications of diabetes and obesity are expensive, too, especially if dialysis or a kidney transplant is needed.

The government recently lowered the weight limits for gastric band [surgery](#) for those with diabetes or heart disease.

**More information:**

Weight-loss info: [win.niddk.nih.gov](http://win.niddk.nih.gov)

Body Mass Index calculator: [www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bminojs.htm](http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bminojs.htm)

New England Journal: [www.nejm.org](http://www.nejm.org)

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