

UK 'should offer surgery to 800,000 obese diabetics'

July 11 2014

Some 800,000 people in Britain with type 2 diabetes could be offered weight-loss surgery by the state-run National Health Service (NHS) under new draft guidance published on Friday.

New evidence suggests that interventions such as gastric bands can help diabetics control their condition and even reverse the diagnosis, according to the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

The NHS, a free-to-access service funded by taxes, currently offers [bariatric surgery](#) to [morbidly obese people](#) with a [body mass index](#) (BMI) of over 40, or over 35 if the person has another serious condition such as diabetes.

The NICE draft guidance suggests extending this to people with a BMI of between 30 and 35 who were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes—a condition linked to being overweight—in the last ten years.

This could see as many as 800,000 people offered the surgery, according to current figures.

"Updated evidence suggests people who are obese and have been recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes may benefit from [weight loss surgery](#)," said Mark Baker, director of the Centre for Clinical Practice at NICE.

"More than half of people who undergo surgery have more control over their diabetes following surgery and are less likely to have diabetes related illness; in some cases surgery can even reverse the diagnosis."

However, experts warned that bariatric surgeries—including inserting a [gastric band](#) to make the stomach smaller or conducting a gastric bypass where the digestive system is re-routed past most of the stomach—were risky.

"Bariatric surgery should only be considered as a last resort if serious attempts to lose weight have been unsuccessful and if the person is obese," said Simon O'Neill, director of health intelligence at leading charity Diabetes UK.

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Citation: UK 'should offer surgery to 800,000 obese diabetics' (2014, July 11) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-uk-surgery-obese-diabetics.html>

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