

Weight-loss surgery puts spark back into relationships

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Bariatric surgery does not only benefit the health of patients who undergo this weight loss procedure. It also leads to greater intimacy between them and their life partners, and adds a spark to their sex life. It's all in all a shared journey that brings partners closer together, says Mary Lisa Pories of East Carolina University in the US, lead author of a study providing insights into the experience of couples after one of the partners underwent weight loss surgery. The findings are published in Springer's journal *Obesity Surgery*.

Bariatric surgery is the most effective way to counter morbid obesity. It results in substantial [weight loss](#) and reduces other health-related conditions. Pories' study is timely as no studies on obesity's impact on relationships have been conducted since 2000. In this period, surgical interventions, methods of support, and the knowledge of the general public about [weight loss surgery](#) have evolved considerably.

The research team interviewed ten couples about the effects of the weight loss surgery that one of the [partners](#) had undergone. All of the patients and their significant others viewed the surgery, and subsequent adjustments that needed to be made, as part of a team effort. They all described ways in which the partners supported and helped the patients care for themselves, including assistance with staying on track with the new routine.

"All of the couples felt their post-operative success was due to a joint effort on the part of both members of the couple," says Pories.

For Pories, the importance placed on couples' shared experiences of the surgery raises questions about how patients without active support systems manage post-operatively.

Several other themes also emerged. Couples highlighted the adjustment that was needed to adapt to their partners' significant weight loss. The couples also had more energy, and needed to adjust to new eating habits. On an emotional level, the [couples](#) reported more positive moods and better self-esteem. They also reported sharing greater intimacy and affection, and being better able to resolve conflict. Their sexual relationships also improved and, in many cases, became more enjoyable.

Pories believes that a better understanding of how [bariatric surgery](#) impacts the dynamics of a couple's relationship could help physicians, nurses and social workers to support patients and their partners more effectively.

More information: Pories, ML et al (2015). Following bariatric surgery: an exploration of the couples' experience, *Obesity Surgery*. DOI: [10.1007/s11695-015-1720-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11695-015-1720-9)

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