

Study finds relationship changes, social improvements after bariatric surgery

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Individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery have a higher probability of getting married, separating from their partner or getting divorced, according to a Swedish study published in *JAMA Surgery*.

We have previously studied the medical benefits of [bariatric surgery](#), but this new study shows that other more personal aspects of the patient's life may also change after bariatric [surgery](#), says Per-Arne Svensson, Associate Professor at Sahlgrenska Academy, Sweden.

Previous studies have shown that bariatric surgery promotes an improved quality of life and individuals become more socially active after the surgery, which could suggest that it might be easier to find a partner after surgery. In this current study, the researchers indeed found that individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery are more likely to find a new partner or to get married compared with non-operated control subjects.

The study also reported an association between the degree of weight loss and the possibility of finding a partner.

The study also showed that separations and divorces are slightly more common after bariatric surgery. The underlying reasons are unclear, but in some cases, the new lifestyle adopted by an individual after surgery may lead to couples drifting apart.

It is also possible that the effects of [weight loss](#), such as improved self-

confidence and self-image, may empower those who have undergone bariatric surgery to leave unhealthy relationships.

However, more research is needed to better understand the factors contributing to this observed increase in relationship breakdowns. It is important that [health care providers](#) are aware that relationship status may change after bariatric surgery so that relevant information and support are provided, if necessary.

It is, however, important to emphasize that bariatric surgery does not automatically lead to a dysfunctional relationship. Previous studies have shown that most relationships are strengthened or are unchanged. This is also supported by our study showing that the majority of individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery remain in the same relationship, many years after the surgery, notes Per-Arne Svensson.

The current study involves two large Swedish cohorts of bariatric surgery: the Swedish Obese Subjects (SOS) study and the Scandinavian Obesity Surgery registry.

In the SOS study, the researchers compared self-reported relationship status (including marriages and cohabitation) in approximately 2000 individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery and approximately 2000 control persons with obesity. In the Scandinavian Obesity Surgery registry, the frequencies of legal marriages and divorces were compared in approximately 29,000 individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery and matched control [individuals](#) from the general population.

More information: *JAMA Surgery* (2018). [DOI: 10.1001/jamasurg.2018.0215](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamasurg.2018.0215)

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