

Frequently Asked Questions – Weight Wise Adult Weight Management Clinic (AWMC)

Q: "What happens after the patient referral for the AWMC is faxed to Alberta Health Services Central Access?"

A: Once referred to the program, patients are placed on a wait list. Please be advised that we continue to have a lengthy wait list for our services. When appointments become available, the patient will be contacted by an Alberta Health Services' Central Access Booking clerk to make an appointment for an initial clinic assessment and the referring physician will be notified. The purpose of the initial clinic assessment is to determine the patient's specific obesity barriers. The next steps include developing a treatment plan. Depending on the patient's needs, the treatment may include:

- behaviour modification
- counseling for nutrition, physical activity, and mental health
- drug treatment and/or bariatric surgery (surgical treatment for obesity).
- transitioning back to your Family Physicians with recommendations from the AWMC.

Health professionals at the AWMC include registered dietitians, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, psychologist, physicians, psychiatrist, registered nurses, and a social worker. Collaboratively, they will decide what further treatment is needed. Please note, bariatric surgery is not appropriate for everyone. It takes several appointments to determine eligibility for bariatric surgery.

Q: "What can I do to help my patients manage their obesity while they are on the wait list?"

A: Evidence supports the importance of ongoing primary care treatment for successful weight management. A reference guide entitled "Treatment and Management of Obesity in the Primary Care Setting" is available to support physicians in managing care for their obese patients. If you would like a copy of this guide, please e-mail the Canadian Obesity Network at giese@obesitynetwork.ca.

We suggest that your patients complete all the available **Weight Wise Group Education Modules** at regular intervals during their wait to ensure continued engagement with weight management interventions.

Other patient resources include the Live Better Every Day program, and the Weight Wise Community Network.

Q: "After the initial assessment, how long do patients receive treatment at the AWMC?"

A: Every patient's treatment needs are different, depending on the cause of their obesity. As a guideline, patients generally attend clinic appointments between 12 and 36 weeks. Remember, obesity is a chronic disease that requires lifelong management and there is no quick fix. After patients are transitioned from the AWMC, the referring physician will receive a treatment plan developed by the patient and the AWMC with recommendations for ongoing follow-up.

Q: "What types of bariatric surgery are offered in Edmonton? What does it involve?"

A: There are three types of bariatric surgery performed in Edmonton: Laparoscopic Adjustable Gastric Banding, Roux-n-Y Gastric Bypass (open or laparoscopic), and Laparoscopic Sleeve Gastrectomy (LSG).

Adjustable Gastric Banding involves placing an inflatable cuff around the upper part of the stomach. This allows the patient to feel full with smaller servings of food. However, it is important to strictly adhere to dietary changes that will include regular frequent meals (up to six meals a day), and avoidance of certain foods. All liquid calories should be avoided (i.e. pop, milk shakes, etc.). It may also be necessary to supplement meals with protein shakes and/or vitamins and minerals.

Roux-n-Y Gastric Bypass surgery involves surgically reducing the size of the stomach (to about the size of your thumb) and also changing how food passes through the gut by bypassing some of the small bowel. Reducing the size of the stomach lets the patient feel full with smaller servings of food. Bypassing part of the gut reduces digestion and absorption of some foods. With this procedure, the patient must adhere to a strict diet plan. It will also likely be necessary to supplement meals with protein shakes and/or vitamins and minerals.

LSG involves removal of the left side of the stomach, resulting in the formation of a narrower stomach 'tube,' which is approximately the size of a banana. The procedure does not require re-routing of intestines or implantation of an artificial device in the abdomen. Weight loss is achieved by increasing the sensation of fullness and decreasing appetite. LSG can be performed on larger patients who may be considered too high-risk for other forms of bariatric surgery. LSG is currently in clinical trials in Edmonton, conducted by Alberta Health Services' Weight Wise and Centre for the Advancement of Minimally Invasive Surgery, and the University of Alberta.

Bariatric surgery can have dramatic results, but is not a quick fix. As with all operations, there are rare but potentially life-threatening risks to be considered. Also, patients are required to make numerous lifestyle changes prior to the surgery, as well as long-term changes after the surgery. Failure to make the required lifestyle changes can result in gaining back the weight and other health complications.

Please note, it takes several appointments to determine eligibility for bariatric surgery and which type of surgery may be best suited for the patient.

Q: "Does AWMC accept patients outside of Alberta?"

A: The AWMC accepts patient referrals from other provinces, however **not all provinces** cover the costs of receiving medical care outside of the patient's own province. It is up to the patient to find out if any costs are covered when making the decision to travel to Edmonton for the Weight Wise Program.