

## **Netcare St Augustine's Hospital**

### *Netwerk24 enquiry*

*Please quote Dr Gert du Toit, surgeon, Durban Metabolic Surgery Centre, Netcare St Augustine's Hospital.*

#### **1. What is metabolic surgery? Is not just a gastric bypass/bariatric – or other interventions, such as?**

Yes, metabolic surgery is a term that refers to a set of possible surgeries including gastric bypass. The three main types of metabolic surgery offered at facilities accredited by the South African Society for Surgery, Obesity and Metabolism (SASSO) include the restrictive procedures such as gastric banding and sleeve gastrectomy; procedures with gastric restriction (i.e. Roux-en-Y gastric bypass), which alter gastro-intestinal peptides; and malabsorptive procedures, which involve bypassing a portion of the intestine.

SASSO-accredited centres have in recent years started moving away from referring to these types of procedures as 'bariatric surgery', in part because bariatric surgery has become strongly associated with cosmetic weight loss surgery for the obese, when it is in fact a great deal more than that, and it is rather offered for the *health benefits* it provides to patients at SASSO-accredited facilities.

In addition, these forms of surgeries not only usually result in weight loss, but also have an important impact on the body's metabolism, which refers to the hormonal processes in the body, particularly those related to food, which the gastrointestinal system converts into energy. Metabolic surgery is, for example, associated with changes to gut microbiota (flora), gastrointestinal hormones, and bile acid metabolism, among a number of others.

Some of these changes in the processes within gastrointestinal system after surgery are incompletely understood, but improvements in most patients metabolic control tends to start to occur soon after these procedures and often even before substantial weight loss has been experienced.

For the above reasons, we are of the view that the term metabolic surgery is a better, and more descriptive and accurate term than 'bariatric surgery'.

#### **2. Why is it called a metabolic surgery centre? Please explain.**

Some of the reasons for this are elucidated above. We are moving to describing SASSO-accredited facilities as 'metabolic' surgery and medicine centres because they follow a holistic approach to metabolic problems, and obesity and its associated conditions. In other words, they do not just perform the metabolic procedures but offer a comprehensive service to the patient.

SASSO has a number of stringent requirements for the accreditation of centres. They must, for example, have a multidisciplinary team in place, which includes an endocrinologist or physician, a psychologist or psychiatrist, dietician, biokineticist and the surgeon. These experts assess each patient individually to see whether the surgery is right for him or her, and whether they are the right candidate for surgical intervention.

#### **3. I do see that the emphasis is here on diabetes type 2 – but can you please list a specific conditions for which surgery, and what type of surgery this is suited? What medical conditions?**

Numerous health risks are inherent in obesity. Each individual's constitution is different and may be impacted by obesity in different ways, and in some individuals may show few apparent negative consequences.

The great majority of those with obesity will, however, find that it starts to have a negative impact on their systems over time and may suffer one or more of various conditions, which in addition to type II diabetes and metabolic syndrome, may include: increased risk for coronary heart disease, certain cancers, the sleep disorder sleep apnoea, mobility problems, and osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease that is sometimes called the “wear and tear” arthritis. In some patients we have noted that treatment also assists to improve asthma symptoms.

In the great majority of patients, metabolic surgery shows a high degree of success in resolving, or at least assisting in the management of these conditions, some of which are potentially dangerous to our health.

#### **4. Metabolic syndrome is not one thing, so how can this be a condition?**

Yes, metabolic syndrome refers to a cluster of conditions occurring together including high blood sugar levels and high blood pressure (hypertension), abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels and excess body fat around the weight.

The syndrome has been shown to increase the individual’s risk of developing heart disease, type II diabetes and suffering a stroke.

#### **5. Elaborate on the type of surgeries and how/what is done?**

As noted above there are three main types of metabolic surgery offered at SASSO-accredited facilities. These include restrictive procedures such as gastric banding and sleeve gastrectomy; procedures with gastric restriction (i.e. Roux-en-Y gastric bypass), which alter gastro-intestinal peptides; and malabsorptive procedures, which involve bypassing a portion of the intestine.

The gastric bypass surgery is particularly effective as it combines three aspects: it restricts the stomach so that it can only accommodate a small amount of food; it reduces absorption of calories and also works on the endocrine system. Such metabolic surgeries have been shown to have a positive effect on the hormone ‘ghrelin’, which influences appetite and how energy is used in the body.

For further information on the different types of procedures you can visit: <https://www.sasso-online.org/types-of-surgeries>.

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