



Surgical Obesity Services

Sarah Wales Story...

Next Christchurch clinic: November 26th 2011

From 123kg 2006 to 75kg 2011



My decision to undergo weight loss surgery was easily made as I had seen the tremendous difference it had made to my daughter, in terms of improved health and well being, not to mention looking even more beautiful than she already did! Of course, this meant I had her support as well as that of my husband and son-in-law.

I am a long-term arthritic and by October 2006, weighed 123.2kg. In May 2006, aged 57, I had a total knee joint replacement and although I was making reasonable progress, the surgeon tactfully commented that I would benefit from "losing a little weight". This should speed my recovery from the knee surgery and hopefully delay, or even eliminate, the need for further joint replacement. In addition I had high cholesterol and slightly raised blood pressure and was on tablets for these.

I found the selection process to be very thorough and was confident that David and the team would only give me the 'Green Light' if they were sure it would be helpful to me. I had been concerned about the psychological interview as I had always been a bit prejudicial against that sort of 'mumbo jumbo' but actually found it very helpful, as did my husband who accompanied me. We were able to talk about what we felt might be superficial and trifling concerns but these were taken seriously and we were given excellent strategies for addressing them. Our main concern was that we would have to drastically curtail our very enjoyable retirement lifestyle which includes a lot of overseas travel (cruises in particular) and regular restaurant meals.

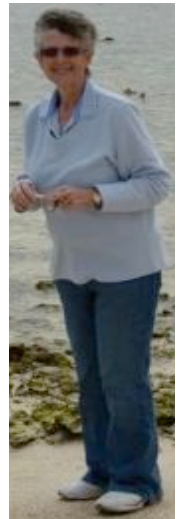
Having read lots of people's accounts of their immediate post-surgery recovery, I know that my experiences were very typical, so I won't recount them here but rather will tell you

how my weight loss has affected my life since reaching my target weight, just 9 months after the operation, in spite of two holidays, one of them a cruise (I had allowed myself a year!).

I should be honest about my one major disappointment, if only so that others in my position are prepared. I have found that the weight loss has had no appreciable effect on the arthritis and that it has continued to worsen, particularly in my feet, spine and ankles. I have had the other knee and a hip replaced since surgery and now need the other hip done. It is possible, of course, that the deterioration would have been even more marked had I still been carrying the excess weight, but I do not feel that I have enjoyed the benefit I expected in that respect. In fairness, I should add that I wasn't promised a 'wonder cure' and that I do have three types of arthritis, only one of them osteo, so my expectations were probably unreasonably high in the first place.

Now the good stuff: My blood pressure and cholesterol returned to normal immediately so I was able to come off that medication and I have stayed within the normal range ever since. Exercise is expected to play a large part in the weight loss process and I have certainly felt far more energised since the surgery. However, due to the arthritis I am unable to do as much as I would like but have to content myself with a little gentle walking and cycling sessions on my exercise bike, which seem to be enough to keep me fit and reasonably mobile.

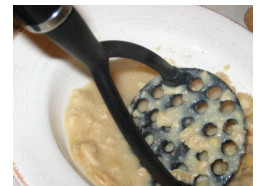
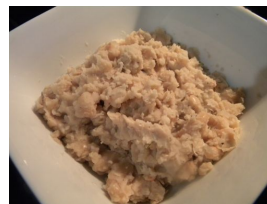
I still love clothes shopping and was thrilled in America recently when a sales clerk told me they were sorry they didn't have anything in my size (how often have we all been depressed by that little scenario?) but on this occasion, they hadn't got anything *small* enough - I had gone into a plus-size store out of habit as I always shopped there in the past! I have shrunk from a size 28/30 top 26 bottom to a 16 top and 12/14 bottom and can now buy not only lovely clothes instead of making them, but also pretty bras and undies, which are not so easy to make...cont on page 2...



After 2 years of trying to get the recipe right, Zola is pregnant, 6 months this month, due early December. Therefore I will be away on maternity leave at some stage later in the year for perhaps 9 months to a 1 year or so, I will have to wait and see how things all go - but I will not be far away. I will make sure that we get a good replacement, and over the next few months they will be learning and sitting in with me, that way they will be fully up to speed and can take good care of you all. So for those with skills in the baby clothes making area etc, get busy. Cheers - Zola (wish me luck).

Mashed potato alternative:

Try mashing cannellini beans with well cooked cauliflower to make a texture similar to



mashed potato. Mix in a little lite sour cream for taste and top your favourite recipe with a creamy topping without the massive carb component.

'EatMe' competition: This month I asked for some tips from those who have had to survive shift work while eating well. The winner is Emma and she will get a free protein powder tub.



I've been working two jobs: full-time during the day, then an evening job elsewhere – food-wise I've had to be even more prepared than usual because I've been eating all 3 meals away from home. Prepared-ness is the key to eating well when you're short of time or doing shifts. My husband makes a little extra and freezes WLS- portions which I heat up at work for my dinner. Or I make a high-protein stew in the weekend and freeze meals for the coming week. I keep food for breakfast at work and replace this at the end of the week & I bring leftovers from home each day for lunch.

My other workplace doesn't have a kitchen, so I take a container with crackers, mini-tins of chicken/tuna, any pantry staples that will last. Then I bring in fresh stuff from home, boiled eggs etc or grab a small pottle of greek salad and hummus that lasts 2-3 meals from the supermarket. I mix fresh and stored items together in a little banquet. So I don't have to bring in food everyday but I don't get bored either. My advice is to have a collection of items stored at your workplace that will last (tupperware is great) to provide a base for meals and then bring in fresh stuff that gives variety every other day.

Next month I would like those who have *successfully survived social situations* (regarding food/alcohol intake and also maybe those who have not told anyone about the surgery) and let others know what some of the tricks are. The winner will get a free tub of protein powder.

You can get free protein powder samples from www.eatme.net.nz



Aged 62, weight 75kg, not afraid to be seen in a swimsuit (with sarong!)

It is still a thrill to catch sight of the slim(ish) woman in a shop window and realize it's me – I don't think I'll ever get used to that and hope I don't! I did experience thinning hair after 6 months but that has grown back and not been a problem since. The only thing I like less about my appearance is the old-age wrinkles;

I used to console myself that the advantage of being 'plump' was that you don't wrinkle, though I must admit that a few 'laughter lines', are a small price to pay for such generally improved well-being.

I know that I am lucky that I am able to stop eating when I've had enough as this is a big problem for some people who never feel full. I obey the rules as much as possible but have adapted them to suit my lifestyle. My husband, who is a little overweight has Type 2 diabetes, he sticks to the regime we have followed since surgery, and he has lost some weight too. We still eat out and I usually order 2 entrees instead of a main, or else just a main – no room for 2 courses now never mind 3. It is worth noting here that restaurants and even cruise ships, have become more aware of healthy eating and nowadays it is rare not to be able to find 'lite' dishes on the menu and most are also happy to split a large portion into 2 for sharing.

Although I had never been a big breakfast eater, now I prefer to start the day with porridge, 1/3 cup of plain oats cooked with a teaspoon of skim milk powder for protein and a cup of trim milk, sometimes I add some fruit as a treat, this fills me until lunchtime. If I have toast or any other cereal for a

change, I am 'peckish' mid-morning and more likely to snack. I no longer want sugar or syrup and cream.

As we are retired we have our main meal at lunchtime. We find it really beneficial as it is more easily digested and we don't get hungry for an afternoon tea treat. We have a large helping of protein and lots of veggies with a smaller amount of carbs. I don't flour and brown meat before casseroles and there is no loss of flavour. I never fry anything (except lamb's liver) and find that I don't even want fried food as the smell of it actually makes me feel nauseous - though I can manage (and enjoy) a few hot-chips on the odd occasion. While I'm in confession-mode, we also usually have a glass of red wine with lunch – breaks the rules, I know but it works for me and I'm trying to be honest here!

In the evening we have a light meal, rich in protein, and often a salad. We do allow ourselves treats and while watching the 6 o'clock news, I have a 1/3 cup ramekin of roasted nuts while my husband has a small bowl of chippies – naughty but nice and better than the whole bag we used to have - we do 'account' for it in our daily reckoning of our intake.

The only other observation I would make is that, especially over Christmas and holidays, I find it easy to fall into the 'portion creep' trap. Worst of all are parties, buffets and barbecues as it's too easy to 'graze' and lose track of what you're eating, especially if you're chatting at the same time. It's OK occasionally but it pays to be aware of it and to make adjustments afterwards to get back on the straight and narrow.

A final word: We all know that it is important to keep up with the various supplements and I also need monthly B12 injections, which my GP does for me. He also prescribes the supplements for me as it is cheaper – so it's worth asking your GP to do the same as then there's no excuse not to take them.

Waikato/Bay of Plenty Support Group: Meeting at 'The Cook', Cook Street, Hamilton East, Hamilton, 2-4pm Sunday 14th August. Any queries please contact Barbara at chickie_babe@ihug.co.nz or 021 139 3805