

On Track with Barix

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Take these **7** steps to get the most from your Weight Loss Surgery

Surgery is the beginning of a new way of living - one that makes health a top priority. And the benefits are nothing short of amazing! When surgery is combined with seven specific behaviors, the rewards are multiplied. Consistently putting effort into these steps can pay off in a big way.

Step 1: Track

Tracking provides valuable insight into current behaviors. It highlights what we are doing right and shows us opportunities for improvement. Over time, it can help us reach our goals. Studies show that people who track food intake and exercise are more likely to be successful in losing weight and keeping it off. Reasons why it works:

- Tracking keeps us aware of what we are eating and how much we are moving.
- When we track foods, we can weed out the foods we thought were “pretty healthy” but turned out to be higher in calories or added sugar than we realized.
- Tracking may cause us to pause before eating and consider if the food helps us meet our goals.
- Whatever numbers are vital to you; tracking provides them. You may track calories, protein, steps taken, vegetable servings, water intake, consistency of supplements, or other relevant numbers.
- Tracking allows you to see how shifts in your intake and lifestyle impact your weight over time.
- Portion distortion is a real thing. Tracking makes it clear that, although the portion size listed for almonds is 24 nuts, 15 almonds may be the portion you need if you've allotted 100 calories for a snack.

Setting, tracking, and meeting goals gives you a sense of accomplishment and encourages you to do more.



Step 2: Eat Right

It's easy to rely on fast and convenient highly processed foods. But these foods hijack your appetite and can limit your success after surgery. You'll eat better and consume fewer calories if you free up time to prepare foods at home. Start with a plan and then prep on your day off. You may want to put foods into single-serving containers for future meals and snacks.

Eat the right foods.

- Start with lean protein-rich foods and fresh vegetables. Add fresh fruits, small servings of whole grains, and healthy fat.
- Eat mostly fresh, unprocessed foods.
- Strive to meet your protein goal daily. It helps you maintain muscle and feel more satisfied. Initially, most protein will come from protein drinks. After you've healed, most protein should come from food.
- Limit simple carbs – foods with added sugars, crackers, granola bars, rice, pasta, potatoes, and bread.
- Choose carbs from low-fat dairy, fresh veggies and fruits, and small amounts of whole grains.
- Keep between-meal fluids calorie-free. Milk and protein drinks count as a meal or snack. Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages. Alcohol can also contribute significantly to caloric intake and may slow weight loss.
- Log food intake to be sure to meet nutrition goals.
- Eat six small meals.
- Eating small frequent meals can help to maximize weight loss.
- Eat every 2 ½ to 3 hours.
- Keep portions in check. Eat ¼ cup to 1 cup of food per meal/snack.
- Take 20 minutes to eat, then stop and put the food away. Don't eat or drink calories between meals.
- Sip on calorie-free and non-carbonated beverages starting 30 minutes after each meal.

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Step 3: Move More

Regular exercise will help you to reach your goal weight and reduce your risk of weight regain. But the benefits go beyond weight control and include:

- Exercise boosts mental health by improving outlook, reducing stress, and lowering anxiety.
- You'll lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, and cancer.
- The capacity increases for physical activity, even simple things like walking up a flight of steps.
- Sleep improves.

The benefits of regular exercise work in synergy to help improve results after surgery. After all, you're more likely to make positive lifestyle choices when you feel better, and it's not as hard to move. Use your current fitness and comfort levels to set goals. Start small, track, and be consistent. You'll be amazed at how quickly your body responds. Keep it as simple as counting steps or have a different activity each day – it's up to you. As you lose weight and improve your fitness, you'll need to increase your effort to get the same benefits. The more you put into it, the more you'll get out.

Step 4: Supplements

Taking the right supplements after surgery is crucial. You'll need a multivitamin, calcium citrate, and vitamin D3. Talk with your surgeon or nutritionist for individual recommendations.



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Step 5: Manage Stress and Emotions

Chronic stress can increase weight by releasing hormones, including cortisol and insulin. Hunger is increased, and fat storage is maximized. Regularly practicing stress management techniques can help reduce the stress response. Methods can be as simple as a breathing exercise or a stroll around the block.

Many of us have learned to eat in response to emotional highs and lows. Celebrating, grieving, happiness, and sadness all involve food when food isn't what we really need. Celebrate with dancing, music, sharing the news with someone close, or a non-food reward. Find comfort with a warm bath, a cup of hot tea, a call to a friend, or a walk around the block.

Eating in response to stress and emotions can limit success with weight loss surgery. If you graze all day, feel that your eating is out of control, or continually make poor food choices, you may want to engage the help of a trained therapist.



Step 6: Sleep

A lack of quality sleep contributes to weight gain. Crazy, but those with poor sleep habits often eat less, exercise more, and still gain weight compared to those with adequate sleep. Who knew? Most of us need 7-9 hours of sleep a night to function at our best.

The bottom line is— good sleep is crucial. Here are some ideas to consider for getting the most out of your nights:

- Go to bed at the same time each night. You'll sync your body's circadian rhythm (natural sleep cycle).
- Keep your bedroom as quiet as possible. Use white noise or earplugs for unavoidable sounds like neighborhood dogs and traffic.
- Sleep in the dark - light interrupts the circadian rhythm.
- Keep your room cool and well-ventilated.
- Put a bedtime routine in place to let your body know it's time to unwind.
- Turn off the television, cell phone, and computers an hour before bedtime.

- Avoid alcohol, excessive fluid intake, heavy meals, greasy foods, and spicy foods in the evening.
- Caffeine is for the morning—even an early caffeinated drink can impact your sleep.
- You may want to include a light snack as part of your evening routine.
- Exercise in the morning or early afternoon promotes a restful night's sleep.
- Use relaxation techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or visualization if stressful thoughts keep you up.

Step 7: Stay Connected

Over time, the natural tendency is to become complacent with our new eating and exercise habits. Old habits creep in here and there. One way to stay on guard is to be connected with other people who have had weight loss surgery. The Barix Clinics Facebook Support Group is an excellent way to do just that. It's inspiring to see amazing before and after transformations. It's motivating to read exercise posts.

Stay connected to your nutritionist and surgeon's office too. We are here to help and support you along the way. Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight isn't a once-and-done feat but a life-long trek.

Additional Steps

- Medications and medical conditions can affect your weight loss. Work with your primary care physician to manage medical conditions to minimize their impact on your weight loss. Medical conditions that can impact your weight loss include:
 - Low thyroid.
 - Medications can slow weight loss.
 - Joint pain can slow you down.
- A probiotic supplement may reduce digestive discomfort, maintain higher vitamin B12 levels, and increase weight loss.