

Hair Loss After Weight Loss Surgery

Hair loss after bariatric surgery is a possibility and for some can be very distressing. We all want to achieve great weight loss results and still have great hair.

The hair loss associated with weight loss surgery is called telogen effluvium and has to do with the normal hair growth cycle. It usually starts abruptly and very seldom lasts longer than 6 months. Human hair has a two stage growth cycle. The growth phase is called anagen and 90% of our hair follicles are in this phase at any given time. The resting phase is called telogen, which lasts about 1 to 6 months, with an average of 3 months. About 5-15% of our hair is in the resting phase at any given time. It is also known that telogen effluvium has to do with stress to the body and hormonal changes that can occur. Due to the stress more hair follicles can enter into the resting phase. This is important because the hair in the resting phase at the time of surgery is most likely the hair you will shed. This is why your hair sheds between 1 to 6 months after surgery (usually about 3 to 4 months). When the hair starts to grow again the old hair follicle is released and you lose hair. Sometimes the hair comes out before new hair grows in. The good news is that the hair will grow back in.

Shedding hair 3 to 5 months after weight loss surgery relates to the normal hair growth cycle. It is the same type of hair loss that can happen to women after child birth.

Why does this happen in people who have bariatric surgery? The most common reasons are:

- Surgery, acute illness, trauma
- Chronic disease such as liver disease or any chronic debilitating disease
- Hormonal imbalance such as hypothyroidism
- Rapid weight loss, low protein intake,
- Chronic iron deficiency or lack of dietary nutrients such as zinc, biotin, potassium, vitamin B6, phosphorus, or essential fatty acids
- Heavy metal toxicity
- Medications such as beta-blockers, excess vitamin A and anticoagulants

Ensuring your post-surgery diet is rich in protein and the appropriate vitamins and minerals can help lessen the severity of hair loss, or even prevent it. Here are some tips to make sure you're consuming the right nutrients to protect your hair.

Tips for Minimizing Hair Loss after Weight-loss Surgery

- Consume a minimum of **60 to 80 grams of protein** each day.
- Include a **protein with every meal**.
- Use **liquid or powdered protein** supplements to meet daily protein intake goals.
- Take bariatric specific **vitamin and mineral supplements** with adequate B vitamins, folate, zinc and biotin as recommended by your doctor.
- Consider the use of an essential fatty acid supplement.
- Get regular follow ups with your healthcare providers to review medical conditions and check your lab work.
- Eat a **wide variety of healthy, nutrient-rich foods** every day.