Weight Loss Surgery May Cause Significant Skeletal Health Problems

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A new JBMR Plus review examines the negative impacts of weight loss surgery on bone health.

The review of published studies notes that weight loss surgery can cause declines in bone mass and strength, and it is linked with an increased risk of bone fractures. Skeletal changes after surgery appear early and continue even after weight loss plateaus and weight stabilizes. Nutritional factors, mechanical unloading, hormonal factors, and changes in body composition and bone marrow fat may contribute to poor bone health.

Most studies have examined the effects of the Roux-en-Y gastric bypass procedure, which was the most commonly performed weight loss procedure worldwide until it was very recently overtaken by sleeve gastrectomy. Because sleeve gastrectomy is a newer procedure, its skeletal effects have not yet been well defined.

The review’s findings indicate that clinical guidelines on weight loss surgery should address bone health as a priority. “Current clinical guidelines do address bone health, but most recommendations are based on low-quality evidence or expert opinion,” said co-author Dr. Anne Schafer, of the University of California, San Francisco and the San Francisco VA Health Care System. “Future studies should address strategies to avoid long-term skeletal consequences of these otherwise beneficial procedures.”

Additional Information


About Journal

JBMR® Plus aims to accelerate the research into bone biology that has underpinned the recent innovative and targeted therapeutic advances in bone, mineral and musculoskeletal research. The NIH-mandated needs for reproducibility and excellence in study design, as well as those for open access, will also be well served by JBMR® Plus.

The recent growth in interdisciplinary research involving endocrinology, geriatrics, orthopedics, and rheumatology also provides a timely opportunity to develop JBMR® Plus, which is designed to serve all members of this multidisciplinary field by publishing urgent research of the highest quality and impact.

JBMR® Plus will publish original research, reviews, detailed protocols and methods, and special articles in basic, translational, and clinical science relevant to bone, musculoskeletal metabolism, and regenerative medicine research. We welcome research on osteoimmunology, as well as research on fat, muscle, cartilage, and kidney interactions with bone. Clinical studies, including trials and observational studies, and epidemiology and pharmacoepidemiology studies are encouraged. JBMR® Plus also welcomes manuscripts on orthopedics, stem cell therapies, specialized biomechanics protocols, novel imaging techniques, and big data.

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