

Dear Doctor



I had gastric banding surgery and have just become pregnant. Do I need to have the band removed?

Answer Provided by Walter Medlin, MD, FACS

No, you do not need your gastric band removed during pregnancy!

There are a couple of important points to keep in mind, though:

During Pregnancy:

- Do your full, regular prenatal care.
- Take recommended vitamins.
- Get regular, moderate exercise.
- Eat nutritious food.
- Never smoke, but especially not during pregnancy.

Make sure you have an expert surgical team available. There are plenty of other caregivers who say they are “knowledgeable” or “familiar” or “comfortable” handling band issues. Unless they have a surgeon in the office, you need to take control and get that extra appointment. Plan to meet with a bariatric program dietitian during your pregnancy, and to have monthly phone calls or telemedicine visits.

Band Adjustments

You do not automatically need to have the band adjusted, but you want to have that relationship “on your speed dial” so that urgent adjustments can happen in a day or two, and also so that you are on the lookout for more subtle changes that may help you avoid a crisis.

Some less experienced providers will jump to completely empty the band, which is not always needed, and can result in excess weight gain.

Of course, it is best if you have kept up a steady relationship with your original surgeon. He or she will know the most about your anatomy, and have records on hand. He or she may recommend a yearly barium swallow to check your band position and function. You definitely want to consider this before any pregnancy, if possible. Even though shields can be used, your healthcare provider will avoid any “elective” use of x-ray once pregnant.



Addressing Problems during Pregnancy

If you are having problems during a pregnancy, that is another matter. All of your providers need to have your important health information, so do not be afraid to remind them. Our office has a trans-nasal endoscope that allows us to inspect the inside of the stomach in the office with no sedative medications. We almost never use this during pregnancy, but it can be a valuable tool.

Your time after pregnancy is also important. Get back in with your program dietitian ASAP – and get regular with a support group and a trainer. Post pregnancy metabolism is not a trap, but there are a lot of moving targets and you need all the angles covered.

Conclusion

A happy mom means a happy family. Taking care of yourself is never harder than this, but your family will benefit from your self-care as well as from your self-sacrifice.

About the Author:

Walter Medlin, MD, FACS, is director of the Metabolic Surgery program at Billings Clinic in Montana and an OAC Advisory Board Member. He struggled with his weight since first grade. After performing hundreds of bariatric surgeries, he underwent sleeve gastrectomy in 2008, with outstanding results. Dr. Medlin is also a participating practice in the OAC Sponsored Membership Program where he gives each of his patients a one-year membership in the OAC and he is honored to be a longtime member of the OAC. Dr. Medlin is also an avid user of Twitter; his handle is “@bonuslife.”

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Did You Know?

Did you know the OAC offers valuable resources on obesity and pregnancy? The OAC Blog currently features a new blog series, written by Nicole Avena, PhD, covering obesity and pregnancy, foods to eat while pregnant and considerations for post-pregnancy. View this blog series by visiting www.ObesityAction.org/obesity-and-pregnancy.



Obesity and Pregnancy

by Nicole Avena, PhD

We have known for quite some time now that maternal weight can have drastic effects on the health outcomes of a child. But what about how your weight affects your ability to get pregnant, and once you get pregnant, how do you maintain an optimal weight to ensure a healthy pregnancy and baby? Overweight and obesity rates continue to rise in the United States and more than half of all pregnant women in the U.S. are affected by excess weight or obesity, where one in five were affected by obesity at the start of pregnancy. A BMI that is 25-29.9 is considered "overweight," whereas 30 or higher is obesity.

Being overweight (a BMI of 25-29.9) or affected by obesity (a BMI 30 or higher) at the start of and/or during pregnancy not only puts the mom at risk for health problems, but the baby is also at a higher risk for certain conditions and complications. Obesity may even be detrimental to your



Nicole Avena, PhD

OAC Membership Application

Why Join the OAC? The OAC is a nearly 50,000 member-strong 501(c)(3) National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to the individual affected by the disease of obesity and helping individuals along their journey toward better health through education, advocacy and support. Our core focuses are to raise awareness and improve access to the prevention and treatment of obesity, provide evidence-based education on obesity and its treatments, fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination, elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health and offer a community of support for the individual affected.

1. OAC Membership Categories *(select one)*

- Individual Membership: \$20/year
- Institutional Membership: \$500/year
- Chairman's Council Membership: \$1000+/year

Are you joining for the first time, or are you renewing your OAC Membership?

- I am joining for the first time *(never been an OAC member)*.
- I am renewing my membership *(have joined the OAC in the past)*.

2. Donation Add-on

Add-on Donation: Make a General Donation

Make a tax-deductible donation to the OAC when joining as a member. Your donation helps the OAC's educational and advocacy efforts.

- \$5
- \$10
- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- Other _____

3. Membership/Donation Add-on Totals:

Membership Fee: +\$ _____

Donation Add-on *(optional)*: +\$ _____

TOTAL PAYMENT: \$ _____

Payment Information

- Check (payable to the OAC) for \$_____.
- Credit card for my TOTAL, including add-ons, of \$_____.
- Discover® Credit Card Number: _____
- MasterCard® Expiration Date: _____
- Visa® Billing Zip Code: _____
- Amex® CV Code: _____

Contact Information

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

JOIN ONLINE! To join the OAC online, please visit www.ObesityAction.org and click on the "Get Involved" tab.

Mail: OAC
4511 North Himes Ave. Ste. 250
Tampa, FL 33614

Fax: (813) 873-7838

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BUILDING A COALITION OF THOSE AFFECTED

The OAC is the **ONLY** non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, member is what gives the OAC its strong voice.

BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP



- Official welcome letter and membership card
- Annual subscription to the OAC's publication, *Your Weight Matters*SM Magazine
- Subscriptions to the OAC Members Make a Difference and Obesity Action Alert monthly e-newsletters
- "Bias Buster" Alerts, alerting specifically to issues of weight bias
- Immediate Advocacy Alerts on urgent advocacy issues and access to the OAC's expert advocacy team
- Ability to lend your voice to the cause

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS