

QUESTION OF THE ISSUE

Q: I am a bariatric surgery patient. What medications are recommended and which ones should I avoid?

Answer provided by Ralph L. Guatelli, RPh, BSPH

There are a number of different surgical procedures utilized for weight-loss. The most common procedure utilized is gastric bypass. In this surgery, stapling is used to create a small, upper stomach pouch which restricts the amount of food able to be consumed. A portion of the small bowel is bypassed, thus delaying food from mixing with digestive fluids to avoid complete calorie absorption. This process may cause a degree of malabsorption.

There are also procedures that restrict the capacity of the stomach by use of bands. Vertical banded gastroplasty or “stomach stapling” creates a pouch and uses a prosthetic band to restrict the outlet of this pouch. This procedure does not change the movement of food or nutrients through the alimentary pathway, and should not affect nutrient absorption.

Drug Absorption

Absorption of drugs occurs primarily in the small intestine, due to the increased surface area relative to other portions of the gastrointestinal tract. Absorption occurs by passage through the intestinal membrane and is influenced by the amount of time it takes for the stomach to empty. Delayed or accelerated gastric emptying could affect absorption.

Absorption theoretically may be affected by the chemical properties of the drug. Drugs, depending on acid hydrolysis to be absorbed, may have varied absorption due to the decreased gastric acid in the stomachs of gastric bypass patients.

Drug Side Effects

When evaluating medication dosing in a gastric bypass patient, we must be aware of that drug’s side effects. There is a wide range of side effects associated with medication therapy, such as increased appetite, fluid retention (edema), gastrointestinal irritation, bleeding or ulceration, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, dyspepsia, increased blood pressure, etc.

Health



Medications

Use of some chronic medications has been evaluated and there appear to be a few changes in absorption. Cardiac medication levels, like Digoxin, should be closely monitored to avoid toxicity during rapid weight changes. Some other drugs show no changes in absorption.

The formulation of a medication may also affect how well it is absorbed by patients. Some drugs require high levels of fluid to facilitate their action. Erythromycin base (film tab) has been shown to have a lower concentration of drug due to delays in absorption in gastric bypass patients. Speculation is that a change in gastric emptying time, resulting in increased drug time in the acidic environment of the stomach, may have eliminated the buffer or protective system in the drug and caused the erythromycin to be destroyed.

Extended-release preparations should be avoided in these patients, since the means of delayed absorption might be affected. These products cannot be crushed for easier swallowing. The delayed release system will be corrupted and can lead to an unusually large amount of medication released into the system all at once.

Drugs that are corrosive to the gastric lining are not recommended for patients. (i.e.: Aspirin, Non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs - Ibuprofen and naproxen, Potassium supplements, to name a few).





ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



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LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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