



# What is a Bariatrician?

By Nicola Grun

- Bariatric physicians are doctors who specialize in helping patients lose weight without surgical intervention. Bariatricians treat obesity and related disorders.

Many people who hear the term bariatrics automatically think of “stomach stapling.” Googling the word produces “barometer,” or an atmospheric pressure gauge. Bariatric medicine is the art and science of medical weight management. The word “bariatric” is derived from the ancient Greek root “baro,” meaning heavy or large.

Bariatric physicians, also known as bariatricians, specialize in the medical treatment of obesity and related disorders. Bariatricians are often confused with bariatric surgeons who perform weight-loss surgeries. Most bariatricians incorporate weight management services into an existing family, internal medicine or OB-GYN practice.

## **Medical Weight Management: A Two-Step Process**

A medically supervised weight-loss treatment program generally consists of changes in diet, physical activity levels and behavioral therapy. Treatment involves a two-step process of assessment

and management. Assessment includes determining a patient’s degree of obesity and overall health status. Management involves weight-loss, maintenance of body weight and measures to control other risk factors.

The cost to participate in a medically supervised weight-loss program is comparable to the cost of weight-loss programs that do not have a physician on site, for example *LA Weight-loss*, *Weight Watchers* and others. Health insurance companies may cover some or all of your bariatric treatment if you have heart disease, metabolic syndrome, diabetes or a pre-diabetic condition.

The American Society of Bariatric Physicians (ASBP) is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to provide continuing medical education for physicians. Approximately 1,200 healthcare professionals belong to the ASBP. ASBP developed Bariatric Practice Guidelines to assure quality bariatric care. ASBP member physicians are encouraged to conform to these guidelines.

## What to Expect during Your First Visit to a Bariatrician

- Physicians perform an initial patient work-up to determine treatment based on each patient's history, physical examination, laboratory work and electrocardiogram. Co-morbidities are assessed and physicians determine if patients are ready and motivated to lose weight.
- Dietary status, weight history and history of mental status are recorded.
- Height, weight and waist circumference measurements are recorded. These measurements help determine body mass index. Additional exams of the head, neck, thyroid, heart, lungs, abdomen and extremities may be performed.
- Laboratory testing usually includes electrocardiogram, thyroid function and other body composition testing.

Physicians provide counseling and follow-up on proper eating habits, exercise, behavior modification and other aspects of weight-loss. Your physician will recommend a diet and set physical activity goals which must be recorded regularly throughout the duration of treatment.

Physicians will review the potential benefits and risks of any medications that may be used during treatment. In addition to medical journals and ASBP's Anorectic Usage Guidelines, physicians rely on their education, training and experience. Any dispensed medications should be packaged and labeled according to applicable laws.

Physicians develop an individual weight-loss maintenance program for each patient after weight-loss goals are achieved.

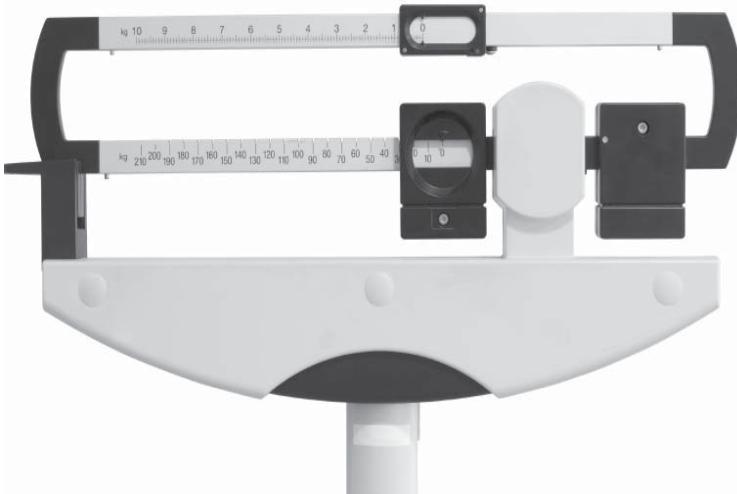
### About the Author:

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## Questions to Ask Your Bariatrician

Before meeting with a bariatrician for the first time, ask the following questions so that you can feel more comfortable with their level of training and expertise:

- Do you specialize in bariatrics?
- Is your education in this area current?
- What kind of initial patient work-up do you perform?
- What is your policy on the frequency of follow-up visits?
- If you prescribe medication, what potential side effects can I expect?
- Do you prescribe low calorie and very low calorie diets with supplements? If so, have you received special training in monitoring patients on these diets?



## About the American Society of Bariatric Physicians (ASBP)

The ASBP is an international non profit medical association with special interest and experience in the comprehensive treatment of overweight, obesity and related disorders. Its mission is to advance and support the physician's role in treating overweight patients.

To locate a bariatrician in your area, please visit the ASBP's Web site at [www.asbp.org](http://www.asbp.org) and click "Locate a Physician," or call (303) 770-2526 for more information.



Obesity Action Coalition

# 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.



PUBLIC EDUCATION



ADVOCACY



ANNUAL CONVENTION



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



VIBRANT COMMUNITY

## 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

**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

[info@obesityaction.org](mailto:info@obesityaction.org)

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