

Gastric band adjustments

This leaflet explains more about gastric band adjustments, including the benefits, risks, and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to the dietitian, doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a gastric band adjustment?

A gastric band is an adjustable band around the upper part of your stomach to limit and control the amount of food you eat. If you have been fitted with a gastric band, you may have regular assessments of your band including adjustments in the first few months after surgery. These are essential to make sure that you have the best chance of successful weight loss.

What happens during a gastric band adjustment?

You may feel a small, hard object below one of your surgical scars - this is called the injection port. Your band will be adjusted by adding or removing fluid through this port, making the band tighter or more loose. Straight after your surgery, your gastric band will have very little or no fluid inside. When you have fully recovered from your surgery you will have your first 'gastric band adjustment'. This is a very quick and simple procedure whereby the injection port is accessed with a needle so that fluid can be added to the gastric band, making it tighter around your stomach. You will need a few of these adjustments before your gastric band is correctly adjusted to the point where it is sufficiently tight enough to reduce hunger, cause early and prolonged satiety, and weight loss.

Fluid will be injected or removed from your band with a special needle called a Huber needle. On most occasions an anaesthetic will not be needed as you will only feel a very small scratch.

Where are gastric band adjustments performed?

Gastric band adjustments will be performed during your outpatient appointment visits at St Thomas' Hospital. A specially trained member of the bariatric (the area of medicine that deals with obesity) team will carry out the gastric band adjustment. This is usually your dietitian but may be a member of the surgical team.

When do I need gastric band adjustments?

Your first gastric band adjustment is usually carried out six to eight weeks after the operation to insert your gastric band. You will receive a letter in the post confirming your gastric band adjustment appointment date and time.

We may need to add fluid to your gastric band:

- if you are feeling hungry
- if you are able to eat larger portions
- if your weight loss has slowed down
- if you have gained weight.

You may need to have fluid removed from your gastric band:

- if you are unable to eat solid food
- if you are relying on liquid or sloppy foods
- if you are experiencing regular regurgitation (bringing up food or fluid after swallowing)
- if you have heartburn (discomfort caused by acid coming back up into the food pipe)
- if you are coughing at night.

Further adjustments to the gastric band will be tailored to your individual needs. Some people may need a lot of adjustment to get their gastric band adjusted right. It is important to remember that the gastric band will not work well if it is too loose or too tight.

You may need a few adjustments (usually between four to eight, occasionally more) before your gastric band is working properly. We normally try to schedule these appointments every six to eight weeks to get the band working as quickly as possible. It is important that fluid is introduced into the gastric band in small amounts so that we can avoid any problems you may experience with an over-tight band. Although patients with an over-tight gastric band may experience initial weight loss, they fail to lose weight over the long term and run the risk of developing complications.

If you require further advice please contact your local bariatric team - contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet.

Do I need to make any special preparations?

No special preparation is required before your gastric band adjustment appointments. Details of where you need to go will be in your appointment letter.

What happens at my appointment?

When you arrive for your appointment please report to the reception desk. You will first be seen by a nurse who will check your height and weight. You will then be taken to a consultation room where you be seen by a member of the bariatric team.

At the beginning of your appointment, you will be asked how you are getting on with your gastric band. It is very important to answer our questions as honestly as you can, so that we can accurately assess how much your gastric band needs to be adjusted. Remember that there is no judgement in our appointments, so you can feel confident that all your experiences with your gastric band will be heard with friendly ears.

What happens during the procedure?

At the beginning of the procedure, we will carefully adjust your gastric band based on the assessment that we carry out. We aim to make a noticeable but manageable change to your eating behaviours. However, each person will react differently to a gastric band adjustment and it is not possible to accurately predict exactly how much fluid a person requires in their gastric band.

An adjustment does not necessarily mean that your gastric band will be tightened. Some people may require fluid to be taken out of their bands. Others may need nothing as their gastric bands are already working properly.

If an adjustment is required, the specialist will clean around the injection port site with alcohol to ensure the area is aseptic (free from germs). They will then have to feel with their hand your injection port to find the correct place to insert the needle. You may be asked to raise your head or your legs up. This squeezes your stomach muscles together which will help to isolate your injection port. Once the injection port is located, the specialist will check the correct positioning of the needle by aspirating (sucking back) a small amount from your gastric band.

At your first gastric band adjustment, the air that is in the tube and gastric band when it was first placed will be removed. This ensures that we have an accurate reading of how tight the gastric band will be made. The whole procedure usually takes about 15 minutes.

What can I expect after the procedure?

You will be asked to have a glass of water and a banana or yoghurt after your gastric band has been adjusted. This is to make sure that your gastric band has not been overfilled. It is important that you do this before you go home.

A soft diet is required for the first 24 hours after your gastric band adjustment. You can then progress to eating normal solid food by day three after your adjustment. It is important to remember that healthy food choices and drinking plenty of fluids between meals are essential for successful weight loss. You will be given a copy of our leaflet '**After your gastric band adjustment**' with more information about what you should eat and drink after a gastric band adjustment.

If your gastric band is filled, you should experience a greater degree of restriction; therefore limiting the flow of food into your stomach. However, this is an individual experience. When you are in the ideal zone for optimal weight loss you should experience:

- satisfaction with small meals
- early and prolonged satiety (feeling full)
- satisfactory weight loss or maintenance.

After your gastric band adjustment, you should still be able to eat normal solid foods, including meat and chicken. You will have to take small bites and chew thoroughly before swallowing. Remember to eat slowly to let the food pass through your band easily and to avoid food from building up in your oesophagus (food pipe above your gastric band).

You should not experience any restriction to liquids, although large quantities in one mouthful (and fizzy drinks) can cause reflux.

What if my band is too tight?

On very few occasions you may find that your gastric band is too tight after an adjustment. If this happens, you may have difficulty swallowing, experience heartburn or frequent regurgitation. In the unlikely event of this happening, please contact a member of the bariatric team immediately - contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

It is important not to leave a tight gastric band for too long as this may lead to other complications such as a prolapse (where the stomach slips through the band) or erosion of the band (where the band grows into the stomach). If your gastric band is too tight and you are unable to tolerate liquids and/or swallow your own saliva, you should go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department to have fluid removed from the gastric band.

What if I still feel hungry after my band adjustment?

The frequency of your gastric band adjustments will be tailored to your individual needs. Remember that often is not always better. Food choices and behaviours are equally as important as your gastric band adjustments. We are hoping that the gastric band will help you to develop long-lasting changes in your diet to limit and control the amount of food you eat.

However, if after two weeks following your adjustment you are still feeling hungry and are able to eat larger portions with no restriction, you should contact the bariatric team for advice. It may be necessary for you to attend a sooner appointment for a further gastric band adjustment.

Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please email the specialist bariatric dietitians on bariatricdietitians@gstt.nhs.uk. Alternatively, call **0207 188 4128** for Guy's Hospital. Out of hours, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics is located on the 1st Floor Tower Wing, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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