

Gastric band adjustments

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

What is a gastric band adjustment?

You have been fitted with a gastric band – an adjustable band around the upper part of your stomach to limit and control the amount of food you eat. In the first few months after surgery regular assessments of your band, with adjustments if needed, are essential to make sure that you have the best chance of successful weight loss.

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

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

Fluid will be injected into 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.

When do I need my band adjustments?

Your first 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 band adjustment appointment date and time.

We may need to add fluid to your gastric band if you are feeling hungry, you are able to eat larger portions and your weight loss has slowed down, or you have gained weight. You may need to have fluid removed from your gastric band if you are unable to eat solid food, are relying on liquid or sloppy foods, experiencing regular regurgitation (bringing food or fluid up after swallowing), heartburn (discomfort caused by acid coming back up into food pipe), or are coughing at night.

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

You may need a few adjustments (usually between four and eight, occasionally more) before your 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 band in small amounts so that we can avoid the problems you may experience with an over-tight band. Although patients with an over-tight band may experience initial weight loss, they fail to lose weight over the long term and run the risk of developing complications.

Please contact your local bariatric team if you require further advice. 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 band adjustment appointments.

What will happen when I arrive at my appointment?

When you arrive for your appointment, please report to the reception desk. Details of where you need to go will be in your appointment letter. A nurse will call you and check your height and weight. You will then be taken to a clinical room where a member of the bariatric team will see you.

What happens during the procedure?

You will first be asked how you are getting on with your band. It is very important to answer our questions as honestly as you can, so that we can accurately assess how much your 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 band will be dealt with in an empathetic way.

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

If an adjustment is required, the specialist will clean around the port site with alcohol to ensure the area is aseptic (free from germs). They will then have to palpate (feel with their hand) your port site 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 port.

Once the access port is located, correct positioning of the needle will be checked by aspirating or sucking back a small amount from your band. At your first band adjustment the air that is in the tube and band when it was first placed will be removed. This ensures that we have an accurate reading of how tight the 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 band has been adjusted. This is to make sure that your band has not been overfilled. It is important that you have this before you go home.

A soft diet is required for the first 24 hours after your 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 an adjustment.

You should experience a greater degree of restriction if your band is filled, therefore limiting the flow of food to your stomach. However, this is an individual experience. When 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 an 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 clear your band and to avoid food 'backing up' in your oesophagus (throat).

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?

We will carefully adjust your band based on the assessment that we carry out at the beginning of your appointment to make a noticeable but manageable change to your eating behaviours. However, each person will react differently to an adjustment and it's not possible to accurately predict exactly how much fluid a person requires in their band. On very few occasions you might find that your band is too tight after an adjustment. If this happens, you may have difficulty swallowing, experience heartburn or frequent regurgitation. In this unlikely event, please contact a member of the bariatric team straight away using the contact details at the end of this leaflet. It is important not to leave a tight band for too long as this may lead to other complications such as a prolapse (where the stomach slips through the band) or erosion (where the band grows into the stomach) of the band.

If your band is too tight and you are unable to tolerate liquids and/or swallow your own saliva, and it is the weekend or outside of normal office hours, then you should go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) to have fluid removed from the band.

What if I still feel hungry after my band adjustment?

How often you need your band adjusted will be tailored to your individual needs. Remember that often is not always better. Food choices and behaviours play just as much of a role as your band adjustments. We are hoping that the band will help you to develop long-lasting changes in your diet.

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 to bring you back in for a further adjustment sooner.

Contact us

If you have any further concerns or queries, please contact,
e: bariatricdietitians@gstt.nhs.uk, **t:** 020 7188 4128.

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, 1st Floor Tower Wing, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT

In case of emergency please call NHS 111

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** 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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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

This service 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 **w:** www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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