



Weight Loss Surgery for Children: A Comprehensive Overview

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the prevalence of childhood obesity has escalated into a significant public health concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the number of overweight children under the age of five was estimated to be over 38 million globally in 2019. This surge in childhood obesity has led to an increasing consideration of weight loss surgery, also known as bariatric surgery, as a potential intervention for severely obese children and adolescents. While traditionally reserved for adults, the procedure is gaining traction as a viable option for younger populations under strict medical guidelines. Childhood obesity is not merely a cosmetic issue but a complex health condition that predisposes children to a multitude of health problems. These include type 2 diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, and psychological issues such as low self-esteem and depression. The long-term implications are equally concerning, with obese children more likely to become obese adults, facing increased risks of cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, and a diminished quality of life. Weight loss surgery for children is considered only after exhaustive attempts at non-surgical weight loss methods, such as dietary changes, physical activity, and behavioral therapy, have failed. The criteria for eligibility typically include: A Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile for age and sex. Generally, candidates are adolescents aged 13 to 17, although younger children may be considered in exceptional cases. Presence of obesity-related health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, severe sleep apnea, or liver disease. The child must demonstrate an understanding of the procedure, its risks, and the commitment required for long-term lifestyle changes.

DESCRIPTION

Gastric Bypass (GB) is a procedure involves creating a small stomach pouch and rerouting the small intestine. It significantly limits food intake and nutrient absorption, leading to substantial weight loss. In Sleeve gastrectomy procedure, a

large portion of the stomach is removed, creating a tube-like structure. It restricts the amount of food that can be consumed and reduces hunger hormones. Adjustable Gastric Banding: A band is placed around the upper part of the stomach to create a small pouch. The band can be adjusted to control the amount of food intake. However, this method is less commonly used in children due to higher complication rates. Weight loss surgery in children carries potential risks, including surgical complications, nutrient deficiencies, and the need for future surgeries. However, the benefits often outweigh these risks for severely obese children. The most notable benefits include significant weight loss, improvement or resolution of obesity-related comorbidities, and enhanced quality of life. Ensuring adequate nutrient intake to prevent deficiencies. Addressing emotional and psychological aspects of weight loss and body image. Monitoring for potential complications and ensuring sustained weight loss.

CONCLUSION

Psychological readiness and family support are critical components in the success of the surgery. Weight loss surgery for children is not a decision to be taken lightly. It represents a significant intervention aimed at addressing severe obesity and its associated health risks. While it offers a promising solution for some children, it requires a comprehensive approach involving medical, nutritional, and psychological support to ensure the best possible outcomes. As childhood obesity continues to rise, weight loss surgery may become an increasingly important tool in the fight against this epidemic, provided it is approached with the necessary caution and care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest.

Received:	29-May-2024	Manuscript No:	ipjco-24-20537
Editor assigned:	31-May-2024	PreQC No:	ipjco-24-20537 (PQ)
Reviewed:	14-June-2024	QC No:	ipjco-24-20537
Revised:	19-June-2024	Manuscript No:	ipjco-24-20537 (R)
Published:	26-June-2024	DOI:	10.21767/2572-5394-24.9.27

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Citation Kandinsky P (2024) Weight Loss Surgery for Children: A Comprehensive Overview. J Child Obesity. 9:27.

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