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Big rise in number of weight-loss operations in Sussex

By Siobhan Ryan, Health Reporter 9:00am Monday 27th August 2012 in News

The number of people in Sussex having weight loss surgery has rocketed by more than 160% in five years.


A total of 256 people across the county had a gastric band fitted or a gastric bypass in the 12 months to the end of March this year.

This is more than double the number having the same treatment in 2006.

The rise highlights Sussex's growing problem with obesity, which is expected to cost the NHS more than £460 million a year by 2015.

It has also sparked concerns that a growing number of people are using surgery as an easy solution instead of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

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However, health bosses insist that surgery is only carried out as a final option.

Consultant bariatric surgeon Chris Pring, who works at the Streamline specialist centre at St Richard's Hospital, Chichester, said there were several reasons for the rise in numbers.

He said: "Patients have seen the results of the surgery and how safe and effective it can be and so more are coming forward to ask about it.

"The NHS has also realised the cost advantage of the operation.

"About 80% of our cases involve people who have developed diabetes and after the operation the problem is resolved. It means the patient does not need further treatment for their diabetes or for any other weight-related problems.

"It is a life-changing operation and if done safely, in the right setting and with proper and full follow-up care, then it is extremely effective.

"It is a last option when all other resorts fail. My job is to help treat the problem. Preventing it from happening in the first place is another issue and that relies on education."

A spokeswoman for NHS Sussex said: "Being overweight or obese is a significant risk to our health; it can lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer, which are not only life-threatening but also affect our quality of life and need to be taken seriously.

"Bariatric surgery is a proven and effective method of helping people to reduce their risk of these types of life-threatening conditions.

"Firstly it reduces their weight and then helps them to maintain a healthier weight and lifestyle.

"However, bariatric surgery is a major operation and is considered only after people have extensively tried other non-surgical ways to lose weight and managed to maintain the weight loss.

"Bariatric surgery is not an easy option, and although it will help reduce a person's weight in the short term, they have to make significant lifestyle changes for the rest of their life to continue to ensure the operation works.

"The best way to maintain a healthy weight is by making long-term lifestyle changes like eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly."

It recently emerged that two teenagers from Sussex, who were 17 at the time, had fat-fighting surgery in the last three years.

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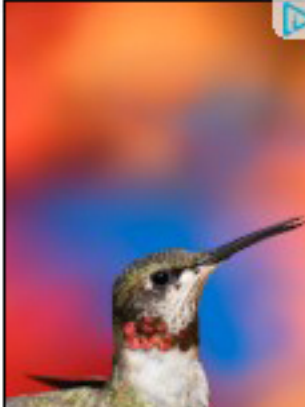
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