



FEMINA READER SERVICE

## How obesity affects WOMEN'S HEALTH

Being overweight can lead to severe health complications in women. Here are a list of the risks involved with obesity

**O**besity has become a global epidemic in both adults and children. It is associated with numerous comorbidities including high blood pressure, diabetes, dyslipidemia, obstructive sleep apnea and certain cancers, and major cardiovascular diseases.

### COMPLICATIONS CAUSED BY OBESITY PCOD (POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN DISEASE):

The link between PCOD and obesity is complicated, though obesity is a characteristic of polycystic ovary syndrome. PCOS is one of the most common hormonal disorders in women of reproductive age. Although the symptoms vary from individual to individual, a diagnosis is usually made after two of the three symptoms are found such as menstrual irregularity, excess androgen and polycystic ovaries. Studies have shown that as little as 10 per cent weight reduction can be effective in restoring ovulation and menses. Weight loss surgery might be one of the options to treat PCOD.

**INFERTILITY:** Obesity increases the production of oestrogen and this hormonal imbalance interferes with ovulation. Women who are overweight or obese are also less likely to respond to fertility drugs. This occurs because the excessive weight obstructs the proper absorption of the fertility drugs used during treatments.

**PREGNANCY:** Women affected by obesity not only have problems with fertility, but are also at a greater risk for pregnancy complications like increased risk of miscarriage, having a caesarean

section, giving birth to a large baby and even gestational diabetes.

**OBESITY AND CANCER:** The link between obesity and cancer is now well established. Women are at risk from post-menopausal breast cancer, cancers of the endometrium, cervix, cancers of the liver, gall bladder and some blood cancers. Though the exact cause of the increased risk is not known, but it may be due to increased oestrogen production, higher levels of insulin and various other factors.

### WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY AS A SOLUTION

Although diet and exercise are the first line therapy for overweight women, most studies show limited ability to lose large amounts of excess body weight greater than 10 kg. Surgical weight loss is an effective option for these women.

The most common procedures performed are laparoscopic gastric bypass and laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy (LSG). Several studies have found improvements in sex hormone profiles and the resolution of PCOS following bariatric surgery. According to Dr Atul N C Peters, director, department of bariatric, minimal access and general surgery at Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital Saket, New Delhi, laparoscopic bariatric surgery has nowadays become

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The transformation after bariatric surgery is remarkable in terms of health and confidence

one of the tools for managing metabolic syndrome in young obese females presenting with PCOS and should be considered along with other medical and lifestyle alterations.

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A study on patients with PCOS followed up over 9 years found improvement in PCOS symptoms (menstrual cycle improved in 82%, hirsutism in 29% and diabetes in 78%) and successful conception in those attempting pregnancy.

In a study of 110 young Italian women who were previously unsuccessful at becoming pregnant, 60 conceived after postoperative weight loss.

Studies also show that patients experience emotional, body image and quality of life improvements after bariatric surgery.