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Downsizing for Diabetes

Gastric bypass surgery is not just for people who want to drop some major weight. Some doctors are now using it to help patients get rid of other health issues. Seven's Richard Lemus shows us why some people are downsizing for diabetes.

WSVN -- Randy Jackson.

Randy Jackson: "It's just all right for me, Paula."

Carnie Wilson.

From celebrities to ordinary people, thousands are transforming their bodies with gastric bypass surgery.

Megan Nocerino: "My heaviest weight was 287 pounds, and right now I weigh 171."

The surgery helped Megan shrink down but, unlike most patients, her reasons were not about dropping the pounds.

Megan Nocerino: "The doctor told me that, because of the abnormally large amount of weight that I had gained, that this was the reason why I gained type II diabetes."

Megan's sugar levels would go up and down, causing chronic fatigue, dizziness and symptoms that became downright scary.

Megan Nocerino: "I would be sitting down and, all of a sudden, I would feel my brain shaking. I would just black out for just a few minutes, but it freaked me out so much that I knew I just had to make a change in life."

When drugs and diet programs didn't work, doctors then suggested a drastic option: bariatric surgery to treat the diabetes.

Dr. Nestor de la Cruz Munoz of the Surgical Weight Loss Institute: "The re-arrangement of the intestines helps bring the food to a different part of the intestine quicker, which helps make some hormonal changes in the body that helps the blood sugar or the diabetes get better."

People with type II diabetes actually produce insulin, but their bodies resist it. Bariatric surgeons have found surgery can help them produce more of the hormone that regulates blood sugar levels, and, in many cases, patients are instantly cured of diabetes.

Dr. Nestor de la Cruz Munoz of the Surgical Weight Loss Institute: "It's not just about losing the weight like we used to think in the past. What a lot of bariatric surgeons found is that 70 percent of the diabetics were going home off all of their diabetes medicines the day after surgery."

More good news: the procedure is often covered by insurance.

Dr. Nestor de la Cruz Munoz of the Surgical Weight Loss Institute: "Some of the patients pay out of pocket but still we do about 60, or 70 percent that are insurance paid."

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Despite the results, bypass is still considered a risky surgery, and doctors don't know if the diabetes will come back if you regain the weight.

It's been one year since Megan's surgery. The weight is gone, but, more importantly, so is her diabetes.

Megan Nocerino: "I am very grateful because I am not experiencing any of the negative effects that I was, and that truly is the most important thing to me. Everything else is icing on the sugar-free cake."

Richard Lemus: "Doctors are also working on a modified surgery for diabetic patients who are not overweight. We will keep you posted on new results from that research."

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If you'd like to learn more about bariatric surgery, Mount Sinai offers monthly educational lectures.

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