



November, 2005

Obesity Surgery

According to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, obesity surgery is riskier than previously thought. The study, which included 16,155 Medicare patients who underwent obesity surgery, found that over 5% of men and nearly 3% of women aged 35-44 died within one year. Death rates among older patients were progressively higher, 40-50% in the 75 and older age group.

Based on the study, patients seeking obesity surgery will have to consider a higher risk of mortality than in the past. Even patients age 25 and younger face a 2% risk of death within one year following surgery. These young people also have the greatest opportunity to reverse the effects of obesity on their health safely, without surgery.

Obesity surgery has become increasingly popular in recent years because it effectively forces patients to reduce their calorie intake. Many see surgery as their only hope because they have tried to diet and failed. The key to long term weight loss success is lifestyle and behavior modification, and with proper guidance and support, this can be accomplished safely without the risks of surgery. Prescription therapy may also increase a patient's chance of success by helping with appetite control.