

Black People Less Likely to Undergo Weight-Loss Surgery

Research shows that metabolic and bariatric surgery can help people lose weight, reduce cancer risk and more.

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Black people with obesity are less likely to undergo [weight-loss](#) surgery compared with other groups, according to a recent study [published in the Annals of Surgery Open](#).

[Obesity](#) affects more than 40% of U.S. adults and nearly 50% of Black Americans, [according to Health Day](#).

[Bariatric surgery](#) involves altering the digestive system to help people lose weight and reduce risk of weight-related health issues. In fact, previous research has shown that bariatric surgery can reduce the [risk of cancer](#) and [cardiovascular disease](#) and lower [mortality](#) in people with obesity and [some forms of liver disease](#).

“As a clinician, I often see patients who could potentially benefit from metabolic and bariatric surgery but who aren’t aware of this treatment option,” said senior researcher Alexander Turchin, MD, MS, director of quality in diabetes at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Hypertension, to Health Day.

The study analyzed records of more than 122,000 people with obesity treated at the Mass General Brigham health system between 2000 and 2022. About 11,100 of those individuals discussed weight-loss surgery with a doctor, according to Health Day.

Researchers found that most (74%) people first discussed the weight-loss surgery with their primary care doctor. What’s more, the annual rate of these discussions increased from about 3% to 10% during the 22-year study period.

“Encouragingly, this study found that rates of discussion and utilization of metabolic and bariatric surgery have increased over time,” researchers wrote. “This increase in discussion rates mirrors the increased safety of metabolic and bariatric surgery procedures over the past 20 years.”

While the rate of weight-loss surgery has increased over time, some groups are still less likely to discuss and follow through with the surgery.

For example, only about 8% of Black people underwent the surgery, compared to 13% of patients of other races. Researchers speculate that mistrust of the medical system or differences in societal pressure to lose weight may contribute to the lower rate of Black people going through with weight-loss surgery.

What’s more, fewer than 8% of men discussed the procedure with their doctors compared with nearly 15% of women.

“Providers need to ensure that patients have all the available information to make decisions about obesity treatments,” Turchin said. “Future studies will be required to understand how the advent of new medications to treat obesity such as GLP-1 agonists impacts patient-provider discussions about metabolic and bariatric surgery.”

In related news, [recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention population data](#) from 2023 show that in 23 states, more than one in three adults (35%) has obesity. Before 2013, no state had an adult obesity prevalence at or above 35%. Currently, at least one in five adults (20%) in each U.S. state is living with obesity.

To read more, click [#Weight-Loss](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[Time-Restricted Eating for Metabolic Syndrome](#),” “[Weight-Loss Surgery Yields Long-Term Benefits for Type 2 Diabetes](#)” and “[The New Weight-Loss Drugs and Cancer](#).”