

Do I Qualify for Bariatric Surgery?

Medical Criteria, Insurance Requirements, and the Qualification Process

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Bariatric surgery is a life-changing decision. This guide explains the medical criteria, insurance requirements, and what to expect during the qualification process.

Medical Eligibility Criteria (NIH/ASMBS Guidelines)

You may qualify for bariatric surgery if you meet ONE of the following:

- **BMI ≥ 40** (severe obesity) regardless of other conditions
- **BMI ≥ 35** with at least one obesity-related health condition: type 2 diabetes, hypertension, obstructive sleep apnea, GERD, fatty liver disease, or joint disease
- **BMI 30-34.9** with poorly controlled type 2 diabetes or metabolic syndrome (updated ASMBS/IFSO 2022 guidelines expanded eligibility)

The Qualification Process

Step 1: Surgical Consultation — Meet with a bariatric surgeon to discuss your history, goals, and surgical options.

Step 2: Medical Clearance — Cardiac evaluation, pulmonary function testing, lab work, and sleep study if not already done.

Step 3: Nutritional Counseling — Meet with a registered dietitian to establish baseline eating habits and prepare for post-surgical dietary changes.

Step 4: Psychological Evaluation — Screening for eating disorders, untreated mental health conditions, and readiness for lifestyle change.

Step 5: Insurance Requirements — Most insurers require 3-6 months of documented medically supervised weight loss. This may include monthly visits with your PCP, dietary logs, and documented exercise.

Step 6: Pre-Operative Preparation — Pre-op diet (typically 2-week liquid diet), final labs, and surgical planning.

Insurance Considerations

- Most commercial insurance plans cover bariatric surgery with prior authorization
- Medicare covers gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy, and duodenal switch
- Many plans require 3-6 months supervised weight management documentation
- Check your specific plan — some exclude bariatric surgery entirely

- Self-pay options range from \$10,000-\$25,000 depending on procedure and location

Questions to Ask Your Surgeon

- Which procedure do you recommend for my specific situation and why?
- How many of these procedures have you performed?
- What is your complication rate?
- What is the expected recovery timeline?
- What long-term follow-up and support does your program provide?

Need Personalized Guidance?

MilenAi Digestive Health offers telehealth consultations with a registered nurse specializing in gastroenterology and digestive health. Get one-on-one support for your questions, medication management, and care coordination.

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