

BARIATRIC SURGERY

Guiding Adolescents To Healthier Lives



Allen Ross of North Plainfield was 365 pounds and borderline diabetic – at the age of 17. He was running out of options.



Shown: Allen Ross is living a healthier, more active life, thanks to the Adolescent Bariatric Surgery Program at The Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. After a rigorous screening process that includes family and psychological evaluations, Mr. Ross underwent bariatric surgery and to date has lost 135 pounds. He also noticed improvements in other conditions sometimes caused by obesity, like asthma.

INNOVATIONS BARIATRIC SURGERY WITHOUT THE SURGERY



Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital is a certified Center of Excellence in Bariatric Surgery and strives to provide the safest, most advanced and efficient quality care for all our patients. This Managed Weight Loss System is now offered in RWJ New Brunswick for adults with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 to 40 who have attempted more conservative weight reduction alternatives.

What is it?

ORBERA™ is a soft, yet durable Intra-gastric, silicone balloon

How does it work?

In a non-surgical procedure typically done under a mild sedative, the thin and deflated balloon is placed into the stomach. It is then filled with saline until it's about the size of a grapefruit.

The procedure normally takes about 20-30 minutes and people can generally go home the same day.

- o Once the balloon is in place, the 12-month coaching program begins.

- o At six months, the balloon is removed in the same way it was placed. Through a non-surgical procedure done under a mild sedative, it is deflated and then removed.

How is it doing?

Data collected in the U.S. clinical trial has shown the average person lost 3.1 times the weight as compared with diet and exercise alone within six months.

"I've had weight problems as far back as I can remember," Mr. Ross said. "Physical activity was tough because I had really bad asthma. Some asthma medication has steroids, and that packs on the pounds, too."

Mr. Ross had tried different diets and exercise programs to lose weight and was told that he may have to be admitted to a hospital where he could be monitored if a solution couldn't be found. However, his problems weren't just physical. "My social life was non-existent," Mr. Ross said. "The only time I ever socialized was at school. I always kept to myself and became an introvert."

Because Mr. Ross had a body mass index of 50 and had tried to lose weight over an extended period, he became a candidate for adolescent bariatric surgery at The Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital (BMSCH) at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ). This program is the world's first designated Adolescent Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence for Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery as designated by the international Surgical Review Corporation. Adolescents must meet specific criteria and follow a structured program to be considered for surgery.

Mr. Ross entered the program and was evaluated by a team of specialists, including a pediatrician, nutritionist, dietitian, cardiologist, pulmonologist, gastroenterologist and psychologist. He began working with Kimberly Brennan, RN, CBN, and a certified bariatric nurse and Bariatric Program Manager at RWJ and BMSCH. A bariatric surgery patient herself, Ms. Brennan screens candidates, coordinates pre-operative education, and leads support group meetings.

"People who have the best outcomes have a specific lifestyle plan in mind," Ms. Brennan said. "Allen was great about following our program, researching the lifestyle changes he would need to make, and discussing everything with his family."

Ragui Sadek, MD, FACS, and Medical Director of the Bariatric Surgery Program at RWJ and BMSCH, performed a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy on Mr. Ross. Unlike other

weight loss surgeries, this procedure doesn't create malabsorption or significant vitamin deficiency, and it feels more natural to patients.

More than a year after his surgery, Mr. Ross has lost 135 pounds and continues to closely follow his nutritional and exercise program. But the changes Mr. Ross sees extend far beyond the scale and mirror.

"My life has done a complete 180," Mr. Ross said. "I'm more social, more talkative. There's no more bullying or people talking behind my back. I can run around with my nieces and nephews. I can't remember the last time I used my inhaler, and my blood levels are in the normal range."

A key component of the Adolescent Bariatric Surgery Program at BMSCH is teaching patients to become leaders. This gives kids more confidence and allows them to focus on something besides weight. Leadership is a role that Mr. Ross has embraced.

"We've found that leaders have the most success in our program," Ms. Brennan said. "Our patients help me teach other adolescents about what to expect before and after surgery. When Mr. Ross speaks to our support group, the kids are entranced and ask a lot of questions."

Now 18, Mr. Ross's desire to help others won't stop there. The 2015 graduate of North Plainfield High School has bigger plans. "I'm going to college to become a nurse,"



Shown: Ragui Sadek, MD (left), Medical Director, runs the Adolescent Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence at The Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, the only certified program of its kind in the country.

Mr. Ross said. "I've always been in hospitals, and my mom was a nurse, so nurses have been a big influence in my life. I appreciate all of the support I've received, so it's important to me to become a nurse."

Dr. Sadek had the global medical community buzzing when he delivered a presentation about the RWJ and BMSCH programs at the recent International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders event in Vienna, Austria. He believes more organizations will follow the RWJ model, and hopes the program's success will lead to a larger conversation about a serious issue.

"We need to talk openly about how to treat morbidly obese teenagers who have serious psychological, social and physical health issues," Dr. Sadek said. "Many children have suicidal tendencies because of bullying and discrimination. We have to expose what these kids go through and offer a comprehensive program to help them. Bariatric surgery is a viable option that should be considered."

Visit www.rwjuh.edu/bariatrics or call 1-888-MD-RWJUH