



## Welcome, Dr. Henry Lin, our newest Bariatric Surgeon!

Henry Lin, MD, FACS  
CAPT (ret), MC, US Navy

Come meet him at support groups.  
See page 4 for schedule.

Graduating in 1992 from University of California, Berkeley and in 1992 from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) medical school in Bethesda, Maryland, Henry Lin MD FACS entered Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) for an Internship in Basic Surgery, completed Flight Surgery training in Pensacola, Florida and returned to NMCS D in 2000 to complete his training in General Surgery.

Subsequently, he went to Fellowship Training at **Harvard's Minimally Invasive Surgery program** in 2009 with emphasis in **bariatric surgery** at **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center** in **Boston, Massachusetts**. While there he was promoted to Commander in Jan 2009 and also was a finalist in the international Laparoscopy "Top Gun" competition. He followed on at National Military Medical Center where he helped with the transition to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, developing the **National Capital Area Weight Loss Surgery** program and worked as the Chief Medical Informatics Officer.

**Dr. Lin's passion is on safely curing the co-morbidities of morbid obesity through metabolic and bariatric surgery when less invasive attempts have not improved the health of his patients.**

His numerous publications and presentations include the Laparoscopic Skills chapter in the Mastery of Surgery, haptics in laparoscopic simulation, several chapters for laparoscopic approach to peptic ulcer disease, contributions to the 4th edition of Emergency War Surgery, Fleet Surgical Team experience, and Providing Surgical Training and Assistance in a Developing Country during Military Assistance, PeriOperative Software Using Existing Hospital Information Systems, Value of a PeriOperative Checklist, Care Pathway for Laparoscopic Sleeve Gastrectomy, and Civilian and Military Surgical Quality Collaborative.

He is a member of the program committee for the annual military surgical symposium, military working group, Quality Outcomes Safety Committee, Bylaws Committee (co-chair) for the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) as well as a member of the Quality Improvement and Patient Safety committee for American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery.

Dr. Lin's Navy operational experience included tours as senior Carrier Air Wing NINE flight surgeon onboard the USS John C. Stennis, general surgeon for Fleet Surgical Team THREE onboard the USS Tarawa (LHA1), general surgeon with Combat Logistics Battalion EIGHT during Operation Iraqi Freedom in Ramadi, Iraq, general surgeon with Alpha Surgical Company to Forward Operating Base Edinburgh in Helmand province, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and also to Djibouti as initially the Senior Medical Officer and took over as the Officer-In-Charge in support for Expeditionary Medical Facility Djibouti on the Horn of Africa supporting troops engaged in anti-terrorism and pirate interdiction. CAPT Lin then transferred to the Naval Hospital Camp LeJeune, in North Carolina where he served as the department head of general surgery and urology and set the general surgical groundwork for the hospital to be upgraded to a Naval Medical Center and Level III trauma facility, and was promoted to the rank of Captain in 2015. He then transferred to 2D Medical Battalion and deployed as Officer-In-Charge of the Forward Resuscitative Surgical System for Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force – Crisis Response – Africa 17.2-18.1. He then followed on as a bariatric surgeon consultant at Womack Army Medical Center at Ft Bragg, home of the Joint Special Operations Command.

His additional qualifications include Flight Surgeon, Fleet Marine Officer, and Surface Warfare Medical Department Officer and his personal awards include Meritorious Service Medal (2), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (3), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (1), as well as several campaign medals and unit awards.

# How to Deal with an Unsupportive Partner, Friend, or Family Member

(Your Weight Matters Campaign. Article summarized by Valerie Curtis, MS, RD, LD)

Having an adequate support system is one of the many keys to success with maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We lean on our loved ones for support and encouragement in good times and bad. What do you do if you find yourself in a situation where your main support person is not so supportive?

It is important to think about their perception. For some, weight management may not be perceived as a positive thing. It may generate feelings of self-consciousness, jealousy, and shame. Others may feel stress, anxiety, or frustration at your goals, because lifestyle changes are hard, and they may not be ready to make the same changes. Think about the relationship and ask “How would I feel in their shoes?”

## Practical Tips:

**Watch your expectations** - Try not to expect everything from your support person that you are expecting of yourself. Not everyone is traveling the same journey or at the same pace.

**Journal it out** - If you are feeling frustrated or angry, don't take it out on your loved ones. Consider writing in a journal to release any pent up emotions.

**Be clear about what you need** - Clear communication is key. Tell your support person what you need (someone to exercise with, help with meal planning, or just someone to listen to your concerns) and leave no room for misinterpretation.

**Be open about your emotions** - Honesty is the best policy, and it is essential for any relationship, romantic or not.

**Seek different support** - If you are not getting what you need for support from those closest to you, look for support elsewhere. Find a different friend or loved one, or a support group (\*See page 4 for a schedule of Support Groups offered by Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss), or a counselor. Don't do it alone.

**Create your own happiness** - Ultimately, you are responsible for your own happiness. Take it upon yourself to build the life that you want and set goals that are meaningful to you.

**Give it time** - Just because your loved ones may have a hard time adapting to your journey, it doesn't mean that it will never happen. Be patient and maintain good communication.

## Surgical Weight Loss Support Groups

We encourage regular attendance to these groups. Attending groups is one way to reaffirm the importance of your commitment to surgery. Studies show those who attend groups, weigh themselves regularly, and record dietary intake are more likely to manage their weight. **Send an [e-mail to Lynn Bolduc](#) if you would like to be put on a reminder list for any one of the groups.**

Did you know...

- Regular attendance at support group doubles the likelihood of successful weight loss after surgery
- Those who regularly attend support group have 3.7x greater success with weight loss surgery

### Bangor: Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center (for all patients, before and after surgery)

When	Where	Time	Leaders	Upcoming Groups	Guest Surgeon/Speakers		
					NL EMMC	Online	
First Friday of every month	Mason Auditorium	4:30 - 6:30 pm	Lynn Bolduc, RD (Dec, Feb, and Apr) and Tama Fitzpatrick, RD (Jan, Mar, and May)	Dec 7, 2018 Jan 4, 2019 Feb 1, 2019 Mar 1, 2019 Apr 5, 2019	Dec	Dr. Toder	Dr. Toder Dr. Kronholm (Psychologist)
					Jan	Dr. Lin	Dr. Toder Dr. Sarah Smith (Anesthesiologist)
					Feb	Dr. Lin	Dr. Lin Dr. David Weed (Sleep Medicine)
					Mar	Dr. Toder	Dr. Toder Anastasia Devore, PharmD
Apr	Dr. Toder	Dr. Lin					

### Online: (Guest speakers are subject to change)

Third Tuesday of every month	Online	5-6 pm	Lynn Bolduc, RD and Tama Fitzpatrick, RD	Dec 18, 2018 Jan 15, 2019 Feb 19, 2019 Mar 19, 2019 Apr 16, 2019
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### Bangor: Northern Light Health Center, Union St. - Staying On Track Support Group (for patients who have had weight loss surgery):

When	Where	Time	Leaders	Upcoming Groups
Second Wednesday of every month	Northern Light Endocrine and Diabetes Center, Classroom 905 Union Street, Suite 11	5-6 pm	Nina Boulard, PhD Clinical Psychologist	December 12, 2018 January 9, 2019 February 13, 2019 March 13, 2019 April 10, 2019

\*Due to the small room size and sensitivity of topics discussed, we ask that you come alone to this group. This group is now open to **ANYONE** who has had weight loss surgery. The group size is typically small.

### Presque Isle: Northern Light A R Gould (Previously known as TAMC)

First Wednesday of every month	McCain A Conference Room	5-6 pm	Ben Mayhew, RD Thomas Merrow, RD Angel Hebert, RD	December 5, 2018 January 2, 2019 February 6, 2019 March 6, 2019 April 3, 2019
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### Waterville: Northern Light Inland Hospital

First Wednesday of every month	Medical Arts Building Conference Room	5 -6:30 pm	Lynn Bolduc, RD	December 5, 2018 January 2, 2019 February 6, 2019 March 6, 2019 April 3, 2019
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## Meet the Team

### **Nina Boulard, PhD, Clinical Psychologist**

Dr. Boulard is a licensed psychologist working at the Maine Rehabilitation Outpatient Center. She received her doctoral degree from the University of Maine and completed her post-doctoral internship at the Boston VA Medical System/Harvard Medical School. She completed her undergraduate training at Yale University. Dr. Boulard consults with the SWLP, conducts psychological evaluations, and provides psychotherapy services. She helps patients prepare for changes they may experience after surgery by examining their expectations, motivation, support system, and overall knowledge of weight-loss surgery. Dr. Boulard joined the team in 2012.



### **Asia Kronholm, PhD, Clinical Psychologist**

Dr. Kronholm is a licensed psychologist working at the Maine Rehabilitation Outpatient Center, Behavioral Medicine. She received her doctoral degree from the University of Maine, where she continues as an associate clinical supervisor for doctoral psychology students. She completed her post-doctoral internship at the Greater Hartford Clinical Psychology Internship Consortium. Dr. Kronholm conducts pre-surgery evaluations to help identify patient's strengths and areas in need of support to enhance post-surgery outcomes. In addition to assessments, she provides therapy services to prepare patients mentally for the changes associated with surgery and/or making health-related

behavioral changes (diet, exercise, etc.). Dr. Kronholm joined the team in 2016.

### **Bryan Fritzler, PhD, Clinical Psychologist**

Dr. Fritzler is a licensed psychologist working at Eastern Maine Medical Center. He provides consults for the program, conducts inpatient and outpatient psychological and cognitive evaluations and provides psychotherapy services. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Maine and his bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas. He completed his pre-doctoral internship the Boston VAMC/Tufts. Dr. Fritzler works with patients to prepare them mentally for the changes brought on from surgery by addressing social support, expectations and patients overall weight loss surgery knowledge. Dr. Fritzler joined the team in 2004.





# Resources

## Quarterly Newsletter

Hard copies of the newsletter are distributed at the support groups and dietitian visits. The SKINNY is published four times per year. If you want to receive this newsletter electronically, please e-mail [Lynn Bolduc](mailto:Lynn.Bolduc) and she will add you to our distribution list. Once on the mailing list, you will receive monthly electronic e-mail reminders about support groups.

### Online Information Session

The NL EMMC Surgical Weight Loss Comprehensive Informational Session is available online! The 75 minute video is broken up into 10 chapters, so it does not have to be watched all at once. If you or someone that you know is interested, please visit [northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss](http://northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss) and click on “**Surgical Weight Loss Information Sessions**” and then [Online Information Session](#) to read more. Once you have finished watching the online class, fill out the form located below the video links or call 973-6383 if you are interested in joining the program.

**Our online class is also a great refresher for those who have already had weight loss surgery!**

### Online Physical Therapy Videos

Check out our new Physical Therapy videos. The 50 minute PT session is divided into 6 short chapters and is available for those starting the program, as well as those who would like to refresh their knowledge on a well-balanced exercise plan.

<https://northernlighthealth.org/Services/Surgery/Surgical-Weight-Loss/Education-Before-Surgery/Physical-Therapy-for-Surgical-Weight-Loss-Patients>

Or from Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss home page, choose “Support Before Surgical Weight Loss”, then “Physical Therapy for Surgical Weight Loss.”

### Check out our Patient Stories

Please visit [northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss](http://northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss). Click on “**Testimonials**”

This web portal has our bariatric surgeons answering questions about weight loss surgery.

### Support Group

We now offer an Online Support Group for those who wish to participate. If you are interested in participating in our online support group, please email Lynn at [Lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:Lbolduc@northernlight.org). See page 4 for the list of guest speakers.

# Ask the pharmacist

Answers from Mark T. Basile, PharmD, Clinical Pharmacist Generalist

Is it safe to take Farxiga after Gastric Bypass? I believe it is Extended Release.

## Farxiga (Dapagliflozin)

I could find no information stating that Farxiga (dapagliflozin) is a timed/extended release medication. In this regard, there would be no issues with continuing it after gastric bypass surgery.

However, it is a newer diabetes medication and like many medications, it has not been studied in GBP patients. Thus, the best course of action to monitor for possibly changes in

drug absorption, is to monitor one's diabetes via the A1c and adjust the medication up to the maximum dose of 10 mg daily if needed.

There is an extended-release combination product containing Farxiga (dapagliflozin) called Xigduo XR (dapagliflozin + metformin). This extended-release combination product should be avoided after bypass and the individual medications (dapagliflozin + metformin) can be administered separately in their immediate release formulations.

## Wellbutrin (Bupropion) XL

The answer will depend on whether you are a GBP or a sleeve patient.

If you are a sleeve patient, that medication will be okay to continue.

If a gastric bypass patient, the medication would have to be changed to immediate release Bupropion (which is NOT indicated for smoking cessation, but likely would still be effective). Alternatively, another medication for smoking cessation could also be prescribed instead. That would be up to the PCP.

Should I stop my Wellbutrin (Bupropion) XL?

I am a pre-op patient and it helps me with cravings.

If your question was about whether or not you need to stop the medication graduation over time or not (taper) since it's an antidepressant medication, generally you do not need to taper Bupropion as withdrawal is rare. However, I would defer to the prescriber on that.

## Cough & Cold Medications

Which cough medicines are safe to take with gastric bypass?

It is very important to read the label to see all the ingredients in the drug product (cough & cold brands can be very confusing as to what they contain).



You are **OKAY** to take Acetaminophen, Diphenhydramine, Dextromethorphan, Guaifenesin.

However, you are **NOT OKAY** to take NSAIDs (Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Naproxen, Aleve), Aspirin. [**NOTE: This is NOT a complete list of forbidden medications.**]

Tablets are the best form to take as liquid preparations may have sugar (sorbitol) and may also have alcohol as well (this can lead to GI discomfort/dumping syndrome).

If you ever have a question, please don't hesitate to ask your pharmacist.

## Celebrate Multi Complete 36



We have introduced Celebrate Multi-Complete 36 as an option to meet your nutritional needs.

It eliminates the need to take additional B12, B complex, and Vitamin D3. Celebrate Multi-Complete is available at the following Miller Drug locations:

Where can I get Celebrate Multi-Complete 36?

- Riverside, 417 State Street
- State Street, 210 State Street
- Westgate, 915 Union Street, Suite 7

You may also contact Bill Clifford, inside sales and sourcing specialist, Miller Drug, at 207.973.6790 or [bjclifford@northernlight.org](mailto:bjclifford@northernlight.org) to arrange shipment directory to your home.

Please note: Miller Drug will be called Northern Light Pharmacy as of January 1, 2019.



# Recipes

## Spaghetti Squash & Chicken with Avocado Pesto

(Recipe courtesy of eating well.com)

Makes 6 servings. Per serving: Calories 311. Total Fat 18g, Total Carbs 17g, Protein 20g



### Ingredients:

- 2 ½ -3 pound halved lengthwise and seeded
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 cup packed basil leaves
- ¼ cup unsalted shelled pistachios
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic
- ¾ tsp salt
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breasts cut into 1 inch pieces.

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Place squash, cut-side down, on one side of the prepared pan. Bake until tender, about 45 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, combine avocado, basil, pistachios, lemon juice, garlic, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper in a food processor. Pulse until finely chopped. Add 3 tablespoons oil and process until smooth.
4. Ten minutes before the squash is done, toss chicken, the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and the remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper together in a medium bowl. Spread the chicken in an even layer on the empty side of the baking sheet. Return to the oven and bake until just cooked through, about 10 minutes.
5. Using a fork, scrape the squash from the shells into a large bowl. Add the chicken and toss gently to combine. Serve topped with the pesto.

## Clean Eating Power Protein Bars

( Recipe shared by Sue Bridges)

Calories 290, Total Fat 8g. Total Carbs 4Protein 15g, Dietary Fiber 5g

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup protein powder of your choice, such as Unjury
- ½ cup quinoa flour (May be substituted with spelt flour, millet flour, brown rice flour)
- 2 cups rolled oats (not instant)
- ½ cup oat bran
- ½ cup coarsely chopped flax seed
- ½ cup wheat germ
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ½ cup agave nectar or organic honey
- 1 cup dark chocolate, chopped into pieces
- 1 ½ -2 cups of Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Coat 13 x 9" pan with cooking spray.
3. Mix protein powder and all dry ingredients in one bowl. Add agave. Stir in the chocolate.
4. In another bowl, mix well the yogurt, oils, and vanilla.
5. Mix the two bowls together well.
6. Put mixture into pan, press down a bit.
7. Cook for about 15 minutes until the edges start to pull away from the pan just slightly.
8. Cut into equal pieces (20~24 pieces), and place onto a cookie sheet. Bake for another 15 minutes, to firm up the edges.
9. After baking for the second time, remove bars to cooling rack.
10. Keep in refrigerator in an airtight container. These also freeze very well.

## Apple Pie Overnight Oats

( Recipe adapted from Livelytable.com)

Makes 3 servings. Per serving: Calories 215, Total Fat 6g, Total Carbs 32g, Protein 18g

### Ingredients:

- 1 medium apple, grated
- 1 cup old fashioned oats
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp maple syrup
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp nutmeg

### Instructions:

1. Combine all ingredients and divide among three mason jars or other containers.
2. Place lid on containers and refrigerate overnight or at least 6 hours
3. Enjoy warm or cold in the morning.



## Online Presentation: Body Contour Surgery After Weight Loss Surgery Wednesday, March 20, 5-6 pm

Please join us for a free online presentation. Dr. Benjamin Liliav, Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center, certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery and uses the latest technology and techniques to create natural looking results that further improve your existing beauty. This webinar is a great resource for those who have completed or are near completion of their surgical weight loss, as well as those with a strong interest in weight loss surgery. Please sign up and register at <https://19.encompasspro.com>

### 2019 Clothing Swaps at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center

In an attempt to help our patients as they change sizes quickly after weight loss, Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss has been having clothing swaps since 2000. We ask that you consider donating gently used, clean clothing. You do not need to donate clothing in order to take advantage of the swap. You can take clothing without giving and give without taking. No money will be exchanged. The clothes not taken at the end of the night are given to charities such as Salvation Army, Goodwill or Shoestring Thrift shop. People usually bring the clothing between 4 and 4:30 pm on the night of the clothing swap and the swap part happens immediately after the support group (6:30 pm) in 2D. This is a patient-led activity which can always use more volunteers. Please contact Lynn Bolduc at [lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:lbolduc@northernlight.org), if you are interested in how to pay-it-forward.

- **Friday, April 5, 2019 Grant 2D room (6:30-7 pm)**
- **Friday, October 4, 2019 Grant 2D room (6:30-7 pm)**

*\*Please note that we do not have a way to store clothing brought in advance and left at our offices.*

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### Hannaford Offers Individual or Small Group Tour for Surgical Weight Loss Patients and Families

Sign up to tour the store one on one or with a small group. Tours are available at the Broadway and Airport Mall locations and are scheduled as requested.

**To sign up, please contact Caitlin Ratten, MS, RD, LD**  
by email [Caitlin.Ratten@hannaford.com](mailto:Caitlin.Ratten@hannaford.com)  
or stop by the Hannaford Customer Service Desk.



## Edie's Story

My story really starts about 30 years ago. I wasn't always a big person. I also was told often that I carried my weight well, whatever that meant.

After having my second child, I noticed that I wasn't losing the weight like I had the first time. And after having a hysterectomy, I also noticed that my metabolism had change drastically. But putting all of those things aside and looking at the reality of what my life looked like, you can say that I had an addictive personality.

The earlier part of my life, I introduced things like cigarettes and Diet Pepsi, but I soon added a love for food. But here's the irony, we live in a society where food is extremely social and we've learned things like "Clear your plate, people in Ethiopia wish they had what you have, you can't get up from the table until you have finished all your food. Let's go to dinner. Let's grab coffee. You sure you don't want something else to eat?" I allowed myself excuses like, I just love the taste of food, oh it's my happy fat because I just started a new relationship, what am I going to do, not enjoy my life? Our minds play a huge factor in how we live our lives. I could never say that I didn't have a problem with food because I did. I would hide food so no one knew the extent of what I ate. I made excuses to allow me the joy of eating on vacations, visiting friends, and anything else I could think of. I began looking into surgery two years ago when I asked my doctor for the umpteenth time what I can do to help lose weight because I just kept gaining. My insurance denied this surgery and I think that sent me into a spiral of eating just that much more. In October 2015, I had an emergent visit to the emergency room where they thought I'd had a stroke.







I was so unhealthy and so unhappy and in November 2017, one more time, I asked if I could have bariatric surgery. This time we moved forward.

Today I know for a fact that it saved my life. During the process of preparing myself for the surgery and all of the testing involved, we found many issues with my health that would never have surfaced otherwise. Because of the surgery I was able to treat things that could have eventually surprised me and potentially been fatal. When asked why I chose to have the surgery, my response has always been I could either die on the

table or die trying to live. My father died at the age of 56 and my prognosis was very similar to his. I saved my life by having gastric bypass surgery! I started this journey at my highest of 255 pounds and six months later, I weigh 160 pounds. I am healthier, happier, and have so much more energy that I am thrilled to be able to live my life now. I have three grandchildren, and I promised them I would be here to watch them grow. And... I am!

Edie Ann

## We need patient stories!

One of our favorite parts of putting together this newsletter is being able to publish our patients' stories of success. If you are interested in sharing your story for a future edition of the skinny, please contact us!

- Lynn – [lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:lbolduc@northernlight.org)
- Valerie – [vncurtis@northernlight.org](mailto:vncurtis@northernlight.org)
- Tama – [tfitzpatrick@northernlight.org](mailto:tfitzpatrick@northernlight.org)
- Andrea – [asaquet@northernlight.org](mailto:asaquet@northernlight.org)
- Miki – [mmarzilli@northernlight.org](mailto:mmarzilli@northernlight.org)
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## Kenia's Story

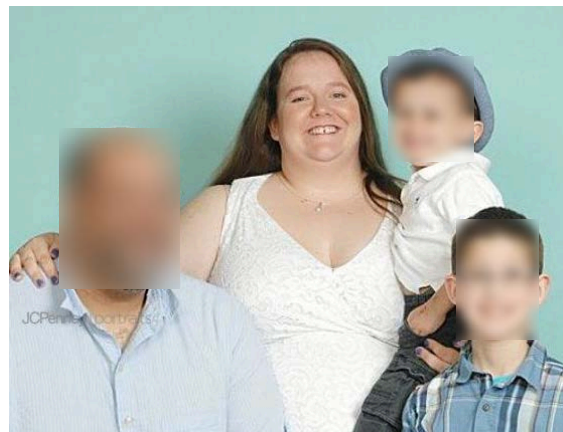
As I look back on my life, I am faced with a reality I think many of us have had to come to grips with. I simply cannot remember a point in my life where I would not have been considered overweight. Growing up I was what I called a healthy chubby girl. I was a cheerleader and gymnast but I was still overweight. It's hard doing sports where the ideal girl weighs about half of what you do. But I accepted that being overweight was just my lot in life. My Mom took me to specialists and they would all try help me, but nothing seemed to work.

I owned my lot in life, if I was going to be the fat girl, I was going to have a personality that was just as big. At least that's what people saw on the outside. On the inside, I was depressed and ashamed of who I was. I constantly feared rejection and doubted myself, and it sucked. So I tried all the diets and all the fads in hopes of shedding the pounds. I joined Curves, counted points and calories, I exercised A LOT. I tried a bunch of fad diets. Name a diet—I've probably tried it. But ultimately they all would fail and I could not maintain the weight loss in the long term. In the short term, I would lose a ton of weight but then when the diet failed, I would turn back to my comfort eating and every pound would come back and then some. I would end up heavier than before the diet, and I felt like a failure every time.

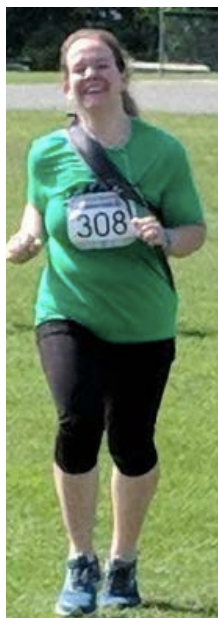


As time passed, I resigned myself to being overweight—a fact I didn't see changing. I told myself I was healthy, so who cared? In reality I was not healthy. At my heaviest, I was 346 lbs. No one is healthy at that weight. I simply avoided doctors and didn't report issues I was having or ignored things like the constant back pain and tiredness and dizzy spells. Later I was diagnosed with diabetes and sleep apnea. The real issue though, and the reason why I joined the Surgical Weight Loss program was that I wasn't living my life the way that I wanted to. I have two young sons who are full of energy and I simply wasn't keeping up with them.

One time, we visited a water park built right into the hotel and it was amazing, but our room was quite a distance away from the fun. Making my way to the park included sitting and taking breaks because I couldn't walk long distances without stopping. My sons and husband got to have their first moments in the park while I sat alone on a couch in a hallway. I missed those moments with my kids. I will never get those moments back, and that was my breaking point. I did not want to miss any more of those moments or sit on the sideline while my kids grew up. I wanted to be a full participant in their lives. I wanted more, and my kids deserved more. After years of living a life at more than 300 lbs, I knew it was time to make a change.



I had friends who had gone through the Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss program and had a great amount of success, so I figured I would at least check it out, although the thought of surgery scared me. I went to my primary care physician who couldn't be more excited for my suggestion and talked about a few patients she had that had done well with the program. I sat for my first introductory class, receiving an educational binder on April 18, 2017. The staff answered all of the questions I had, and seemed to care about me and my feelings in the process. Next came my first support group meeting, where everyone was just as nice and just as willing to answer my many questions. I was in awe as everyone went around the table sharing their stories, both their successes and their pitfalls. The best part was that they were all real people I could connect with and relate to. I left my first meeting scared, but excited and I knew I wanted to keep going to the support groups. I could see a little bit of myself in every story they told and it gave me the confidence to continue with the program. Everyone in the program wanted to ensure my success. They gave me tips and pointers that I could use throughout the program and made sure I had every bit of knowledge I needed to achieve my goals and more. I stuck with the tips and suggestions and found success before I even met with Dr. Toder for the first time.



It took me a little longer than I would have liked to have my first meeting with the surgeon, but that had nothing to do with the program and was a result of a slow process with the Sleep Apnea people. At first I was angry I felt like my process was so slow but then I came to realize that I could let it break me or I could take it as an opportunity. I spent more time working on building the habits I needed for life after surgery. I also spent more time losing weight and getting myself in a healthier, safer place to have surgery. I met with Doctor Toder for the first time on October 30, 2017.

I am a teacher, so I pushed off my surgery date for over Christmas break. I had my gastric bypass on December 28, 2017. That meant spending my holidays on a liquid diet, but it was well worth it. I went into surgery at peace with the process and feeling confident that I was forever changing my life in a positive way. In the hospital, the staff was kind, knowledgeable, and very supportive.

Before I knew it, the surgery was over and I did just fine. I woke up and started moving and never stopped. I walked miles during my hospital stay. I was honestly surprised that I even had surgery. The pain was minimal and my surgery sites were so small I couldn't believe it. I had a c-section with my youngest son and feared that the pain would be similar to that, and I was wrong. My surgery was a cakewalk compared to that.

My one year anniversary of my surgery is rapidly approaching and all I can say is that I feel amazing. I have lost over 190 lbs since the start of my process. I literally am smaller than I was in high school. I am a new healthier and happier me. My energy level is not even comparable to what it was. I fully participate in my life now in a way that was not possible before. I am able to do the things I always wanted to do and am able to play with my kids and no longer missing those precious moments the way that I had. I climb mountains, run marathons, and am in the best shape of my life. I no longer have sleep apnea, and my A1C levels hover around 4.5, so no sign of diabetes.

The people in my life generally can't believe how much I have lost. If I see people who I haven't seen in a couple of years they can't recognize me. My students have called me an inspiration. I never once thought I could have made it to the point I have. I have reset my goal weight several times

because I keep hitting that mark and realizing I can reset my bar. I think for the first time in my life I don't feel like I need to lose any more weight. I am at a weight that is healthy and at a weight I feel good at.

If you're considering the Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss program, I strongly encourage you to start the process and start coming to meetings. I know that if I can do this, then so can anyone. I am not special, but this program is and it can literally change your life. It has changed my life in ways I can't even wrap my head around, and it can do the same for you. I am so thankful to all who has helped me in my journey and literally given me the life I only dreamed possible.

Kenia Edwards

