



**National
Anaesthesia Day**
October 16, 2015



Obesity and anaesthesia

It is estimated that one out of every three people across Australia and New Zealand is obese (body mass index over 30), and an increasing number of this group is morbidly obese. These people face an increased risk of complications when they need an anaesthetic for an operation.

If this is you, it is important you discuss these risks with your medical team, including your anaesthetist. Your team can advise you about steps you can take to lower these risks, including reducing your weight and increasing exercise where possible. Bariatric surgery (an operation on the stomach to help a patient to lose weight) might also be recommended.

Excess weight:

- Is often associated with health problems such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease – conditions that compromise anaesthesia and make it more difficult for the body to heal after a medical procedure.
- Makes it more difficult for the medical team to best position patients for an operation; to find their veins for injections and to keep patients' airways open during anaesthesia.
- Puts the heart under extra pressure, especially under anaesthesia.
- Complicates maternity care – for instance, it can make it very difficult to accurately insert an epidural.
- Can make some procedures under anaesthesia difficult to carry out, and may even mean that it is too risky to have some operations at all.
- Makes it more difficult to manage pain following surgery and anaesthesia.

Your medical team may suggest you increase your activity and make some changes to what you eat and drink. Whatever you can do to get fit for your operation and anaesthetic will help with your procedure and recovery.

Some patients have even found that losing weight meant they did not need an operation after all. So talk to your medical team about what is right for you.

Anaesthetists – caring for the body and its breath of life.

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