Eisenhower Introduces New Bariatric Center

Eisenhower Medical Center recently introduced the new Eisenhower Bariatric Center to the Coachella Valley. Bariatric surgery refers to a variety of surgical procedures that are used to treat cases of morbid obesity. Currently, surgeries are being performed by Bobby Bhasker-Rao, MD, FACS, Board Certified Surgeon, who specializes in advanced laparoscopic and bariatric surgery.

According to "Dr. Bobby," as he is known to colleagues and patients alike, the National Institutes of Health considers bariatric surgery the gold standard of treatment for morbid obesity. The procedures are recommended only for individuals who are more than 100 pounds overweight and have a body mass index (BMI) of more than 40, or for those who have a BMI (a ratio determined by height and weight) of more than 35 with co-existing health problems, such as heart disease.

The new Center will offer patients two of the most effective and most performed bariatric procedures: gastric lap banding, which limits food intake by using an adjustable band to decrease the size of the stomach, and Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RYGB), which restricts food intake and bypasses a portion of the digestive tract. Dr. Bobby performs both the gastric lap band and RYGB procedures laparoscopically, using five small incisions through the patient's abdomen. This minimally invasive approach reduces a patient's length of stay in the hospital, usually to one or two nights depending on the procedure, and speeds recovery, allowing patients to return to their daily routines in a matter of weeks.

"Surgery is generally the last resort, but it is a safe option for many who are significantly overweight and suffer from numerous health problems," says Dr. Bobby. *"It results in long-term weight loss and improvement or complete resolution of many associated health problems. I am very excited to be a part of the bariatric surgery program here at Eisenhower Medical Center."*

"Dr. Bobby did my surgery earlier this year, and I have lost more than 80 pounds. He is an outstanding surgeon, and he cares about each and every patient. He has performed more than 700 successful bariatric procedures."
—Sarah Vazques, RN

Prior to their surgical consult, patients must attend a seminar that provides information about the surgical options and the post-surgery lifestyle changes necessary to ensure the surgery's long-term success. Following the surgery, the Eisenhower Bariatric Center provides all patients with ongoing counseling under the direction of Sarah Vazquez, RN, who has recently undergone a successful bariatric surgery.

"Dr. Bobby did my surgery earlier this year, and I have lost more than 80 pounds," Vazquez says. *"He is an outstanding surgeon, and he cares about each and every patient. He has performed more than 700 successful bariatric procedures."* Vazquez works with patients to develop nutrition and exercise programs that will help them adapt to the modifications to their digestive tracts caused by the surgery, and ensure they keep the weight off.

Vazquez also leads support group meetings held monthly at Eisenhower for anyone who has had bariatric surgery at Eisenhower or elsewhere.

"We have amazing results with bariatric surgery, but it is very important that patients understand they must do their part by committing to a healthier lifestyle," Vazquez says. *"We understand it can be hard to do that alone, so at Eisenhower we make sure they have the support they need."*

For more information on the Eisenhower Bariatric Center, or to register for a seminar, please call 760-837-8490. See the calendar on page 55 for more information about the bariatric surgery seminars and support group.

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