

Overweight Oz kids turning to Gastric Band surgery

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Australian teenagers are turning to gastric banding surgery in increasing numbers in a bid to lose weight according to local surgeons.

{mosgoogle} Morbidly obese children (Body Mass Index of 35 or more), some of whom are as young as 14 and as heavy as 400 pounds are undergoing the drastic surgery in a last bid attempt to reduce their weight and avoid weight related health complications, such as heart disease and diabetes.

One surgeon in Brisbane, Blair Bowden, says that he regularly operates on children weighing more than two healthy adults. In Australia, there is no minimum age for undergoing gastric banding surgery, with the only requirement that the children can make an informed decision and give informed consent.

Dr Bowden places much of the blame on the lifestyles and diets adopted by children today.

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"Our kids are inactive as a result of PlayStations, the internet, remote-controlled TVs and the fact parents drop their kids at school and won't let them play at the park because of the risks involved," he said.

A spokesman for the Australian Medical Association, Dr. David Thomas, commented on the need for parents to intervene before children become morbidly obese and develop other health problems.

"Weight of 140kg is very severe," Dr Thomas said. "Unfortunately, it's a common problem and becoming more common. We'd like to prevent the condition that is occurring and remove the need for surgery. Those who have the banding will feel uncomfortable if they eat too much, which is unnecessary if you learn to eat less in other ways."

However, he warned that gastric banding was not a panacea and a miracle cure, noting that patients can still have the surgery and fail to change their lifestyle accordingly afterwards.

"They can still eat badly, just not as much," he said. "It doesn't mean they'll exercise."

Medical statistics indicate that one in every four Australian children is overweight and the gastric banding procedure has now grown in demand, such that it is the second most performed procedure, after gall bladder surgeries.