



*John W. Tsai, M.D., and
Lindsay Erickson, R.N.*

FIND THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

For more information about the Bariatric Support Group, please contact Elizabeth Cobb, R.N., at **912-265-5125** or **ecobb1@sghs.org**.



Healthy SUPPORT

Bariatric surgery can be a first step to weight management. Nutrition education and support help to build healthy habits.

An estimated 196,000 people in the United States had bariatric surgery in 2015, according to the latest figures from the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery.

For Southeast Georgia Health System's bariatric program team, healthy and sustainable weight loss doesn't begin — or end — with surgery.

"Our program is really about making people healthier," says John W. Tsai, M.D., board-certified general surgeon specializing in bariatric surgery with Southeast Georgia Physician Associates-Glynn General & Vascular Surgery, a strategic affiliate of the Health System. "And that's only possible through a comprehensive program integrating nutrition classes, support group meetings and wellness education."

Dr. Tsai explains that the pre-operative process typically takes three to six months.

With guidance from bariatric coordinator Lindsay Erickson, R.N., and support group mediator Elizabeth Cobb, R.N., plus other staff specialists, surgical candidates begin behavioral health counseling, nutrition education and an exercise regimen. They attend free monthly meetings (required pre-surgery; also available post-surgery) and learn about dietary logging.

"Most everyone has tried something to manage their weight," Ms. Erickson says, "but our patients have reached the point where, for them, it's no longer just about eating less and exercising more.

These are people who want a second chance at a healthy life."

Mrs. Cobb adds, "During the pre-operative process, patients learn that surgery is not a cure-all, and that they have to be willing to make lifestyle changes. They have to go through the steps — the nutrition education, the psychological evaluations and the goal-setting."

Dr. Tsai explains that patients review the types of bariatric surgery available to them, with most choosing the minimally invasive laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy, as do almost 54 percent nationwide.

"It's very effective in short- and long-term weight loss," he says, "and also has the benefit of curing or improving many common weight-associated conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and sleep apnea."

In the year after surgery, patients have several follow-up visits, then annually for five years.

"Surgery offers a jump-start in respect to weight loss," Dr. Tsai says. "Ultimately, the fundamentals of healthy living and meeting wellness goals are changes that the patient has to make. That's the hardest part." ●

Bariatric Support Group

When: 4:30–6 p.m., fourth Wednesday of each month

Where: Brunswick Campus, Kemble Conference Center, 3011 Kemble Ave.

Details: 912-265-5125 or **ecobb1@sghs.org**