

This document will give you information about inserting a gastric balloon. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a gastric balloon?

A gastric balloon is an inflatable silicone balloon that is inserted in your stomach. It works by making you feel full sooner so that you eat less (see figure 1).

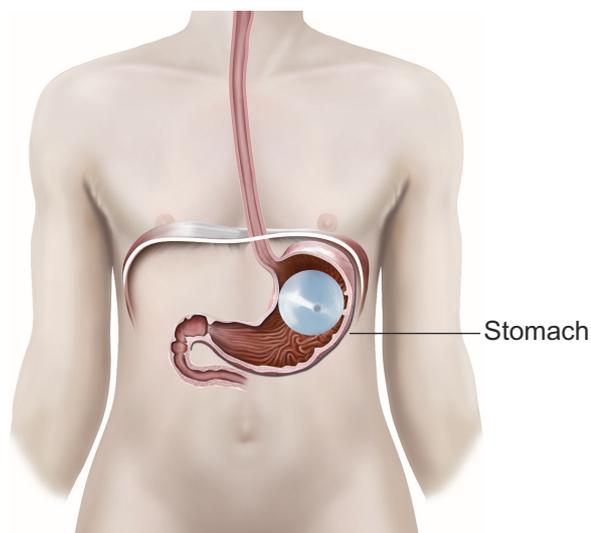


Figure 1
A gastric balloon in the stomach

Is a gastric balloon suitable for me?

If your BMI score is over 40, surgery may help you to achieve long-term weight loss. Surgery may also help if you have a BMI over 35 and have other medical problems such as Type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure.

A gastric balloon can only stay in place for up to nine months. For this reason, a gastric balloon can be used to help you to lose weight to prepare for weight-loss surgery or for an operation that you have been refused until you lose enough weight.

What are the benefits of a gastric balloon?

You should get improved eating habits to help you to achieve long-term weight loss, but this depends on your ability to keep to your new lifestyle.

If you need weight-loss surgery or another operation, having a gastric balloon should help prepare you.

Long-term weight loss should improve most obesity-related health problems you may have.

Are there any alternatives to a gastric balloon?

The simple approach to losing weight involves eating less, improving your diet and doing more exercise. Sometimes medication given by your GP can help.

There are surgical alternatives to a gastric balloon such as gastric banding, shortening your digestive tract, sleeve gastrectomy and gastric bypass.

Is silicone safe?

Many studies have been carried out to find if silicone is safe. There is no evidence to suggest that people who have gastric balloons have a higher risk of developing diseases such as cancer and arthritis.

What does the procedure involve?

Inserting a gastric balloon usually takes 20 minutes to an hour.

If appropriate, your doctor may offer you a sedative to help you to relax.

Your doctor will place a flexible telescope (endoscope) into the back of your throat and down into your stomach. They will use the endoscope to pass the deflated balloon into your stomach. The balloon is attached to a soft tube and your doctor will use the tube to inflate the balloon with air or saline.

What complications can happen?

- Allergic reaction
- Breathing difficulties or heart irregularities
- Infection
- Making a hole in your oesophagus or stomach
- Damage to teeth or bridgework
- Bleeding
- Incomplete procedure
- Feeling or being sick
- Developing acid reflux
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Failure of the balloon
- Bowel obstruction

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

You may be able to take only liquids for a few weeks, progressing to soft food and then, after about one to two weeks, to solid food.

You should be able to return to work after one to two days, depending on how soon your stomach settles and your type of work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Your doctor will need to remove the balloon after six to nine months. This involves another endoscopy.

On average, people who have a gastric balloon lose over one third of their excess body weight.

Summary

Inserting a gastric balloon may help you achieve long-term weight loss if a simple approach involving eating less, improving your diet and doing more exercise does not work.

Acknowledgements

Author: Mr Ian Beckingham DM FRCS

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