

Medical Minute



LOSE IT—GAIN IT - Almost all of us have tried to lose weight at some point in our lives—possibly as recently as breakfast. We do have a few blessed exceptions in our congregation who are actually trying to GAIN weight. Can you believe it? I tried to donate some of mine, but apparently extra pounds are not transferable. If they were, I'd be the church's most generous giver.

Then there is the famous “yo-yo effect”: we lose, we gain it back, we lose, we gain it back, and eventually the bathroom scale needs counseling. Even with revolutionary GLP-1 medicines like Ozempic and Wegovy, the same thing can happen. About 70% of patients who take GLP-1s gain back much of their weight after they stop taking the drug—some within just 18 months. But stop the presses, hold the doughnuts, and tell the scale to calm down: there may be hope in a new minimally invasive surgical procedure called “duodenal mucosal resurfacing.” People who had recently lost at least 15% of their body weight on a GLP-1 drug and then had this procedure regained far less weight after stopping the medication than patients who did not have the procedure.

Please do not ask me for specific technical details. I hear “duodenal mucosal resurfacing” and immediately need a nap and a pronunciation guide. In simple terms, the procedure renews the lining of the upper small intestine, where many hormones affected by GLP-1 drugs are produced. The result may be a kind of metabolism reset that helps preserve the benefits of weight loss from the medication. No serious side effects were reported, and patients can return to normal activities in about a day—which is good, because most of us have errands, meetings, and snacks to get back to. This comes from a study at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine. Now, if they could just make pastries, candy, and carbohydrates work like GLP-1 medicine, then we'd really have ourselves a medical breakthrough. I would volunteer for that study immediately—and bring my own cinnamon roll.