

## MY BARIATRIC JOURNEY

In all honesty, in my denial, I somehow thought I would not be a candidate. I thought I wasn't overweight enough (I find that funny) and I was too old. I didn't think I would qualify and managed to somehow be surprised when Dr. Huguet told me I did. I had high blood pressure and used a CPAP for sleep apnea. My PCP was on board, and I began to take my weight seriously.

The next time I saw Dr. Huguet, I had begun to lose weight. I then went through the process of the endoscopy, insurance coverage, PCP letter, and all the other steps required to have surgery. And then it was scheduled.

I should probably mention that I have had many surgeries so that didn't concern me at all – Dr. Huguet noted that I had had gallbladder surgery and said it would be a similar recovery. No problem. I was a little concerned about the preop diet, but I didn't have much trouble with that and was very rarely hungry. By my surgery date (January 23, 2023) I had lost some weight, and the preop diet, surgery, recovery, and postop liquid diet went well. I began to really lose some weight and my appointments with Kelly were really encouraging with my weight loss. The nutritionist was amazing and helped me a lot before and after surgery.

In early March I had a major unrelated setback with a lung bleed. I was hospitalized for 6 days (where I had a bronchoscopy) until they found a way to stop the bleeding (interventional radiology). I was very weak due to having several days that I was being prepped for surgery and couldn't eat or drink. It took a while to regain my strength. During all of this, Kelly and the staff at Dr. Huguet's office were very supportive and kept encouraging me. I started going to the gym, and the weight continued to come off and I was feeling good. Then my pulmonologist insisted I treat for MAC – a lung infection that had been diagnosed 5 years before but not treated because the treatment is difficult and lasts 2 years. I tried to take the medications, but within a week I was very sick and quit them. In June I had another small lung bleed and an overnight hospitalization. A bronchoscopy was done, and I was released. My cultures were positive for MAC, and my pulmonologist again insisted that I be treated for MAC. My new infectious disease doctor agreed, and I tried to treat it with a very expensive medication (I qualified for a grant) that is available only to a very limited population. That medication made me too sick to continue. With the blessing of my infectious disease doctor, I have stopped treating the disease and am aware that I will eventually have issues.

I say all that just to explain why I have days that I just don't feel well. I have some difficulty getting my liquids and protein in, but I do try to count and do what I need to do for my gastric sleeve. Amazingly, while I was in the hospital for those 6 days, I insisted on staying on my bariatric diet. Unfortunately, at that time the hospital food service was not trained in the required diet. I am pleased that Dr. Huguet's practice and the hospital have since worked together to set up the program for those patients who need it.

I continue to lose weight, but it's slower now. If I overeat, I feel it. I haven't had sugar since October 2022, and I use a tiny plate for my meals. I'm back in the gym two or three days a week, sometimes more, sometimes less. I have a lot of loose skin, but I don't plan to have surgery for it. I have never regretted my decision to have my gastric sleeve for even a moment and if asked I would recommend MIIS to prospective surgical candidates.

I have tried to encourage others in the bariatric Facebook groups to continue their journey, and I don't believe I have mentioned my health challenges since I don't want to discourage anyone from getting the surgery. Despite the setbacks, I have achieved my major goal – I can cross my legs! I guess that's a funny goal, but it was something I haven't been able to do for years.

I'm a little more than 9 months postop. I've lost 75 pounds!