

There's a never-ending battle between waistlines and pocketbooks for many Americans. It's cheaper to buy processed, fatty foods at the drive-thru while healthy options usually cost more.

We're in a time right now that Jason Bill, MD, an interventional gastroenterologist with OSF HealthCare calls an "obesity epidemic."

Data from the [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\)](#) would back up that claim, stating that more than 100 million adults in the U.S. are obese. The prevalence of obesity increased over 11% when comparing statistics gathered from 1999-2000 to statistics from 2017-March 2020. In the earlier timeframe, obesity prevalence was 30.5%. The latest data showed obesity skyrocketed to 41.9%.

Tis the reason for countless "magical" [weight loss drugs](#) popping up on commercials, food-prep companies offering specials and [zero-calorie](#) drinks lining store shelves. But there's no real sign of promise yet that America's obesity problem is slowing down. This leaves many frustrated by the never-ending struggle of trying to eat healthily while working out, and not seeing any progress.

If you're in that demographic, you're not alone, and there may be a newer option to consider.

Introducing endoscopic bariatric procedures

In the last six to 12 months, Dr. Bill and his team at OSF HealthCare have started performing endoscopic bariatric procedures, a minimally invasive option to help patients lose weight.

Dr. Bill says this option is perfect for those who either don't qualify for bariatric surgery or for those who qualify but just do not want to undergo surgical intervention. His team is able to offer two different procedures: Endoscopic Sleeve gastropasty and trans-oral outlet reduction.

"I think the patients that do the best are patients who have a body mass index (BMI) of 30-40 motivated and active, but just not getting to where they want to go with their standard diet and exercise," Dr. Bill says. "We do everything through the mouth with our endoscopes. We take a camera to the stomach and use an endoscopic device that goes on the tip of the endoscope to run sutures and decrease the volume of the stomach. These are restrictive procedures, with the sleeve gastropasty we are reducing the volume of the stomach by about 70 percent."

Another option Dr. Bill's team offers is called outlet reduction.

"It's been really nice for patients who have had bariatric surgery and now are a few years out, but they start noticing they feel hungry or are gaining weight," Dr. Bill says. "We use that same suturing device and narrow down that prior opening that has stretched out over time."

Minimally invasive means minimal recovery time. Patients go under general anesthesia, undergo the procedure, and then go home the same day. Dr. Bill says side effects are minimal as well. You might have some nausea and stomach discomfort for two to three days. However, the symptoms after the outlet reduction are even less severe, leaving patients energized and ready to get back on their weight loss journey.

How could endoscopic bariatrics and weight loss medicine connect?

"I think they should be used together. I think patients who will do best are those that undergo either surgical or endoscopic weight loss procedures initially. Then, during their follow up consider starting a medication such as Mounjaro or Wegovy that can result in more robust weight loss," Dr. Bill says.

‘Take the lifestyle change head on’

The endoscopic weight loss procedure isn't a get-out-of-jail free card to return to poor eating habits. It's also not an excuse to cancel that gym membership or give up on daily exercise.

"The follow up after the procedure is probably as important, if not more important than the procedure itself. The procedure is likely to be successful, because your team is highly skilled, but the rest of the success is built on the patient's motivation, diet, and exercise since it's a lifestyle change. They have to take that head on otherwise the procedure is not going to work," Dr. Bill says.

These procedures are generally covered by Medicare and Medicaid. However, it's hit or miss right now with other commercial payers. Dr. Bill's team collaborates with the weight loss management team at the RiverPlex in downtown Peoria to get patients prepared for a procedure, and you'll always know ahead of time whether insurance will cover your procedure.

If an endoscopic bariatric procedure sounds like something that would benefit you, you can call OSF Medical Group – Gastroenterology at 309-308-5900.