

Surgery is life-changing



Debbie Tracy lost weight and significantly improved her health through bariatric surgery.

Debbie Tracy used to take 11 different medications a day, including 1,000 units of insulin.

That was before she truly understood the impact nearly 300 pounds had on her health, and before she put herself and her future first and underwent bariatric surgery at Community Hospital.

In the two years since her surgery, Tracy has lost 115 pounds – and nearly emptied out her medicine cabinet. Today she takes only a low dose of blood-pressure medicine. And she has swapped what was her normal attire, sweatpants, for a more fitted wardrobe.

“These days,” says Tracy, “I keep my pants snug, because I can and because it helps me keep my weight in check. If the pants get tight, I lighten up on the menu. I battled weight for 30 years. I’ve been on every diet there is at least twice. I tried hypnosis, and I believe in it, but it didn’t work for me. I’ve done Weight Watchers® probably 15 times, and I’ve been very successful.”

But the success didn’t last, and her health worsened.

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“I finally got to the point where my test results were so scary. My cholesterol, my blood pressure, my blood sugars were off the charts; and I had fatty liver disease, which developed into cirrhosis of the liver,” she says. She also had type 2 diabetes.

“I knew I was headed down a path of doom, that if I didn’t do something drastic, if I didn’t get help at another level, I would follow the footsteps of my family.”

Tracy’s sister and mother had heart attacks at age 42.

“I’ve always exercised a lot,” she says, “and it helped some; but as the weight gain became greater, my ability to exercise became less. Food became number one on my brain. I needed the insulin for my blood sugar but, ironically, it’s a hormone that increases hunger and induces fat. Everyone I’ve known on insulin is ravenously hungry all the time and produces fat. I felt like I couldn’t win for losing.”

Then she met with Dr. Mark Vierra, a general surgeon who specializes in bariatric procedures. She underwent a gastric bypass, reducing the capacity of her stomach as a tool to help her lose weight and gain a healthy lifestyle.

“Both Dr. Vierra and my own research told me to trust that it would work for me,” Tracy says. “There are negatives to it, but I saw that the positives outweighed the negatives. With any surgery, you can have complications. But I realized that if

I didn’t lose weight the risk of something happening to me medically was higher than the surgical risks of this procedure.”

Tracy also understood that bariatric surgery was not a panacea but the means to help her learn how to lose and manage her weight.

“I fought for so long to lose weight,” she says, “and I had almost resigned myself to thinking it would never happen for me. Still, this hasn’t been easy. Bariatric surgery is a tool. It has given me the strength and the well-being to look at food and say, ‘Do you really want to step over the line and risk the return of that weighty life?’ This is a mindset, a lifestyle. And, at 58, my lifestyle is active.”

More information about bariatric surgery, including a schedule of a monthly overview and introductory lecture by Vierra, is available at www.chomp.org or call Community Hospital at 649-7230.