



Bariatric Psychology Service

Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology & Metabolism, University Hospitals Galway

Living with obesity is very challenging to our physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing. Obesity is a complex, progressive and relapsing chronic disease that impairs our physical and mental health.

The Bariatric Psychologist provides psychological assessment, intervention and support to adults living with obesity and attending the Bariatric Services in University Hospital Galway (UHG) which is a Specialist National service covering most of Ireland. The Bariatric Psychology Service is for all adults living with obesity who present with psychological issues in the context of and directly related to living with the condition. This includes in-patient, out-patient, direct and in-direct work as well work with the multi-disciplinary team, staff consultation and allied agencies that support the person living with obesity.

2. Aims of the Service:

Our aim is to provide an accessible, efficient, effective and person-centred psychological service aimed at maximising the health, well-being and quality of life of all adults living with obesity. The Bariatric Psychologist supports psychological difficulties across a bariatric surgery pathway. These can be roughly categorised as: a) pre-existing psychological difficulties, b) psychological difficulties specifically related to the behaviour changes involved in bariatric surgery and c) post-operative development of new difficulties or reactivation of pre-existing difficulties. These assessments focus on readiness/preparedness for surgery.

Psychological care is focused on evidenced-based principles of chronic disease management based on lived experiences and moves beyond simplistic approaches of 'eat less, exercise more'. Regardless of pre-operative mental health vulnerabilities, bariatric surgery requires major changes to eating behaviour and development of new skills, which may be difficult to maintain without psychological support.

3 When you can have bariatric surgery

Your GP may refer you for assessment and management in a bariatric surgery centre if you:

- have a BMI of 40 or more
- have a BMI between 35 and 40, and other conditions that could be improved with weight loss
- have a BMI over 30 and a weight-related condition that cannot be managed with medicine
- have made lifestyle changes and tried medicine but these have not improved your weight-related health problems enough
- are safe to have anaesthetic and surgery
- can commit to long-term follow-up

5. Who can refer?

Referrals are accepted from all members of the multi-disciplinary Bariatric Medicine team in University Hospital Galway.

Clients eligible for psychological assessment:

- Present with active symptoms of suspected Binge Eating Disorder (BED) or other form of disordered eating (e.g. emotional eating, impulsive eating, night-eating, excessive grazing).
- enduring mental health issues;
- significantly lowered mood and/or elevated anxiety;
- severe self-esteem/body image issues;
- interpersonal difficulties and self-stigmatisation;

7. What happens then?

Referrals will be screened for suitability, prioritised according to need and service availability discussed at our Bariatric Medicine multi-disciplinary team meeting.

Thank you.

Dr Mary Hynes

Senior Clinical Psychologist