

Shedding weight and worry

"My blood sugar this morning was 116, and it used to be 200 in the mornings," says Jim Johnson, 67, Knoxville. "I'm on no diabetes medication whatsoever, no insulin and no pills, I'm not on any cholesterol medication, my blood pressure is 110 over 68 with a resting pulse rate of 65, and I've been off the CPAP for six months."

Johnson is enthusiastic about sharing how much his life has changed since undergoing gastric bypass surgery at Fort Sanders Center for Bariatric Surgery last year. He's happy with the results, but also amazed that he spent so many years of his life not realizing how much his extra weight was holding him back.

His only regret is that he didn't do it sooner.

Johnson once carried 244 pounds on a body that is five feet and three inches tall. That's a lot of weight for a man of his stature, but he says he couldn't tell the extra pounds were slowing him down, so the weight never bothered him.

"I've always had a high motor," Johnson jokes. As an energetic person with a successful career, a family to care for, and many other responsibilities in his community, Johnson never felt like his life was lacking anything.

But as he began to age, the weight started to take a toll. Diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sleep apnea, and GERD began to tip the scales toward a life that was not quite so satisfying by the time he reached his 60s.

He had managed his health with periodic exercise and diet changes over the years, but when his diabetes medication stopped working effectively, Johnson took



Jim Johnson before and after losing nearly 80 pounds thanks to gastric bypass surgery at Fort Sanders Regional.



a time when he could put his hectic life on pause, gastric bypass surgery was performed by Mark Colquitt, MD in June of 2015 at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center.

"I'll say this, I don't think I've ever been treated better in a hospital or by healthcare providers," Johnson says of the team involved in his weight loss surgery.

Exercising regularly and paying careful attention to the doctor's instructions on diet, the scales of his life began to tip back in his favor. "On surgery day I weighed 218, and at my six-month checkup I was down to 146," Johnson says. "I had lost 78 pounds, and I was within six pounds of my goal weight."

His life has improved in ways he never imagined. Before losing the weight, Johnson says he couldn't bend over to tie his shoes, and what he thought was a high energy level before gastric bypass surgery is nothing compared to the powerhouse he feels like now.

"The stamina and energy I have is just incredible," Johnson says. "I would recommend gastric bypass surgery to anybody."

Johnson emphasizes that weight loss surgery is not an easy way out. It takes discipline and dedication. The procedures offered by Dr. Colquitt are simply meant as a tool to help patients be proactive about having a better quality of life.

"It's like if you go to the garage to work on your car," Johnson explains. "You have to have the right tool, and they gave me the tool I needed."

Johnson advises anyone whose life is restricted by weight to talk to Dr. Colquitt about bariatric procedures. "I would do it again in a heartbeat," he says.

a long, hard look at where his life was headed.

Johnson wasn't afraid of death,

but with a wife he loved, children, and grandchildren he adored, the prospect of life ending too soon

troubled him. He decided to pursue a weight loss procedure, and after crossing a few hurdles and finding

Fort Sanders Center for Bariatric Surgery

Obesity and its related illnesses are a growing threat to the health and well being of Americans. Diabetes, heart disease, orthopaedic problems, and sleep apnea are just some of the medical conditions caused or worsened by obesity.

At the Fort Sanders Regional Center for Bariatric Surgery, patients receive guidance and support before and after surgery because bariatrics is a lifestyle change.

Bariatric surgeons Mark Colquitt, MD, and Jonathan Ray, MD, only perform bariatric procedures, and two certified bariatric nurses spearhead the program. The program also offers nutritional and psychological support as well as a free fitness center membership for patients.

Eligibility Criteria:

Only patients considered morbidly obese or those with debilitating co-morbidities are candidates for bariatric surgery. Eligibility guidelines include:

- Have a Body Mass Index (BMI) over 35
- Are experiencing severe negative health effects related to obesity, such as high blood pressure or diabetes
- Cannot achieve a healthy body weight for a sustained period of time, even through medically-supervised dieting

Patients are encouraged to attend a free seminar. For dates, times, and locations, please visit www.fsregional.com/bariatrics.



865-673-FORT (3678) • www.fsregional.com/bariatrics

* Joint Commission Top Performer in Surgery Care, 2012, 2013 and 2014.



Mark Colquitt, M.D.



Jonathan Ray, M.D.

Interested in Learning More?

We invite you to attend one of our free informational seminars to learn more about the bariatric surgery process. Find a seminar below nearest you and call **865-541-BAR1 (2271)** to register today.

July 14	Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center	Classroom 1, Lobby Level	6 p.m.
July 28	Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center	Classroom 1, Lobby Level	6 p.m.
Aug. 11	Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center	Classroom 1, Lobby Level	6 p.m.
Aug. 25	Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center	Classroom 1, Lobby Level	6 p.m.
Sept. 8	Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center	Classroom 1, Lobby Level	6 p.m.
Sept. 15	Parkwest Medical Center	Classrooms 1 & 2	6 p.m.
Sept. 22	Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center	Classroom 1, Lobby Level	6 p.m.

Maintaining weight loss

Bariatric patient Jim Johnson will tell you that it's not easy. Gastric bypass surgery is a tool to help restore health, not a magic wand.

"The reason I'm successful is because I'm a stubborn son of gun," Johnson says. But he emphatically declares that his new life is worth every ounce of effort he's had to put into it.

"I'm tickled to death," Johnson says. "I'm 67 years old, and I feel more like I'm 30."

Here are Johnson's top tips for maintaining weight loss after surgery, with input from his surgeon, Dr. Mark Colquitt:

1. Educate yourself before the surgery. Know what to expect, and have a plan. "You have to go through a lot of things to make sure you're ready for this surgery," Johnson says. "It's a commitment."

2. Follow the doctor's orders regarding diet. Dr. Colquitt recommends three small meals a day, with the focus on protein. Don't consume beverages until 30 minutes after your meal.

3. Get plenty of support in groups and online. "I got on a bariatric support group on Facebook," Johnson says. "If you have somebody who has a shared

interest, it's easier."

4. Drink plenty of water. Need it flavored? Johnson recommends dropping a couple of frozen strawberries (no sugar added) into a water bottle to avoid artificial sweeteners.

5. Keep a journal. Dr. Colquitt encourages his patients to stay on top of the changes in their bodies, and how their bodies are being fueled. Johnson uses a phone app to keep track of everything from blood sugar levels to the food he's eaten.

6. Exercise. Dr. Colquitt's patients receive a free, six-month membership at Fort Sanders Health and Fitness Center. Johnson says that was critical in his success after bariatric surgery.

8. Go for it! Johnson says one of the reasons he's been successful is that he went into this process understanding that bariatric surgery isn't a magic spell. Maintaining the weight loss takes discipline and commitment, but it's a life investment worth making.

To learn more about weight loss surgery at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, visit fsregional.com/bariatrics, or call 865-541-2271.



Excellence!

The Fort Sanders Center for Bariatric Surgery is now a designated Center of Excellence!

If you are struggling to lose weight, please attend our free seminar to learn about the benefits of bariatric surgery that go beyond weight loss.

Visit www.fsregional.com/bariatrics for more information and seminar dates.

