

WELLBEING

BAND Aid

With the rates of obesity in the UAE at an all-time high, HELLO! talks to Dr Muffazal Lakdawala, the man who's focused on combating the shocking phenomena

With the party season in full swing, it's inevitable that even the most disciplined dieter finds it hard to resist the calorie-loaded canapes and over-flowing bubbly. While some will have no problem shedding the extra festive kilos, others struggle to get back on the wagon.

With more women around the world being self-confessed yoyo dieters after attempting everything from healthy eating plans to crash diets, it's no surprise that the World Health Statistics report records that UAE has the seventh-highest proportion of obese women in the world.

The shocking rates of obesity within the region makes it the fifth most obese nation in the world, with reports indicating that the average adult living in the UAE consumes over 3,000 calories per day, almost 20 per cent above the general average of 2,500 for men and 2,000 for women.

Many medical practitioners strongly believe that a combination of unhealthy sedentary lifestyles and the region's take-out culture are among the leading contributors.

Focused on combating these high rates of obesity, world-renowned weight-loss surgeon Dr Muffazal Lakdawala is all set to start his scar less technique of bariatric surgery in Dubai.

Here, **HELLO!** talks to the master of both scarless and key hole surgery, as well as the author of *The Eat-Right Prescription*, an international best-seller that offers diet advice from a medical perspective, to find out just how he plans on tackling the high rates of obesity across the Middle East.

You opened your first clinic the Centre of Obesity and Digestive Surgery (CODS) in India, what inspired you to open your practice in this region?

It took me a while to get here but logically it made a lot of sense. I already have over 200 patients within the region who regularly visit me in India for follow-ups and for the actual surgery itself. So, I thought 'why not remove the hassle of travelling and applying for a visa and just open a clinic here?' The UAE as a whole has both high rates of obesity and diabetes and no one does scar less surgery here so, it's perfect location.

Who's the typical client for weight-loss surgery?

The ideal criteria for weight-loss surgery is someone with hypertension, cholesterol, sleep apnea and diabetes. Someone who is at least 30 kilos overweight for their height and whose BMI is at least over 35. For younger girls it would be those whose weight is around the 90-100 kilo mark and or those with either Polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD) or Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) and those who have tried every form of exercise and diet and still haven't lost any weight.

When it comes to weight-loss surgery there are many different types but the sleeves and the full bypass surgery remain the most popular... could you tell us the difference between the two?

The sleeve is meant for younger patients as they are more likely to exercise and keep the weight off and most girls are iron deficient due to their monthly cycle so I wouldn't want them to opt for bypass

surgery as they would have to take multi-vitamins like B12, calcium and iron for the rest of their lives. But if you have reflux disease, I wouldn't recommend the sleeve as it will aggravate the problem. The Gastric bypass is steered towards the elder population as they are most likely being treated for diabetes or for osteoarthritis, so they can't walk, which means that exercise is not an option.

How long does the procedure take?

All my bariatric surgeries take a maximum of an hour and a half.

What's the recovery time?

Generally my patients go home the day after their surgery and then you have a down time of around four days regardless of the surgery. But it does depend on the patient, some are up and mobile in a few hours and others take a bit longer but it's usually no longer than a week.

How long does it take to see results?

It depends from person to person but usually best results are seen six months later.

One of the biggest concerns that patients have with weight-loss surgery is the possibility of putting the pounds back on... what advice do you give them?

It depends on where you start from, for example if someone of a BMI of over 60 has sleeve surgery, they tend to gain the weight back very fast whereas someone with a much

lower BMI won't gain as much weight. The plateau for weight gain is usually between two to five years, so if you are going to gain weight it should happen between this time. If you do put on weight it will in most cases reach its peak at the end of those five years.

What are the main ways of keeping the weight off?

When we open in Dubai later this year, we will have the entire solution ready for you... which includes everything from nutrition, a life coach, a fitness instructor and a psychologist. All of which, will be available on one platform to help get you the best results. We deal with everything holistically, before, during and after surgery.

What about those who are diabetic but underweight or normal weight and so are not ideal candidates for surgery?

The normal or underweight diabetic should concentrate on all the other options open to them, which we also offer and can help them with. Diet, exercise, yoga sessions, counselling...

Patients with any weight goals can come to you, right?

We have solutions for everything to get you to your optimum result. Whatever your weight goals are, we can provide an answer whether it is surgical or not surgical, to put on or to lose or even maintain your perfect weight.

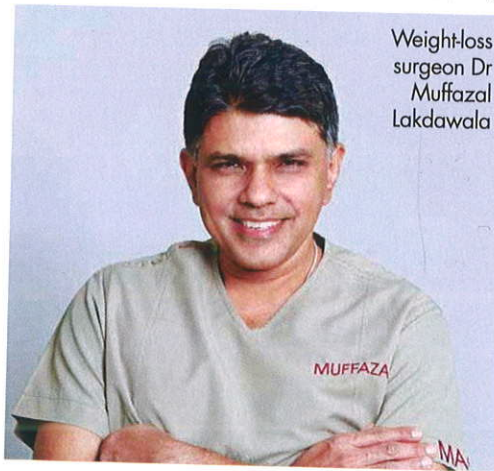
Can you tell us a bit about your best-selling book?

It's not hardcore nutrition, it's simple recipes that are medically guaranteed to ensure results. This book is basically me telling you that healthy food doesn't have to be boring, it can be tasty. Eat, but eat right!

Weight-loss surgery isn't the only kind of surgery you do, is it?

When it comes to scarless surgery, we also do it all. From removing the appendix to gall bladders and hernias, anti-reflux procedures to removal of parts of the colon or the pancreas. It isn't publicised as much but in India, 50 per cent of our work is actually to treat cancer.

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