

TULSA + HEALTHCARE PROFILES

A New Lease on Life

Bariatric surgery helps people beat obesity and live longer.

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Dr. Ty D. Kirkpatrick

Rightly considered an epidemic and public health emergency in the United States, obesity is linked to heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, stroke, and several forms of cancer, making it one of the leading causes of preventable, premature death.

Dr. Ty D. Kirkpatrick with Surgery Inc., Oklahoma's oldest private surgical practice, takes pride in the part he plays in battling obesity. Each time he performs a gastric bypass or laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy surgery, he says, he's giving his patient a powerful tool that will lower their risk of contracting certain forms of cancer, reduce or eliminate other health problems, and ultimately add years to his or her life.

“I love it when patients come back for their six-week checkup and tell me they're off of all of their diabetes medications,” says Dr. Kirkpatrick. “I love hearing them talk about how they can be more active and play with their children or grandchildren. It's personally rewarding to see the transformation in these people's lives.”

Life-Changing Results

Weight loss is never easy, and medical conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome, arthritis, diabetes, and sleep apnea can make losing weight nearly impossible without medical intervention.

Fortunately, people with one or more such conditions and a body mass index of 35 or higher are likely to qualify for bariatric surgery.

Of course, just as with the treatment of any other medical condition, surgery is considered a last resort for treating obesity.

“It can be a very challenging surgery,” says Dr. Kirkpatrick, who serves as medical director of bariatrics at St. John Medical Center. “We are operating around very delicate structures, and it requires a skill set that

not all surgeons have.”

A general surgeon with fellowship training in minimally invasive surgeries, Dr. Kirkpatrick's experience level, expertise, and knowledge of robot-assisted surgical techniques enables him to take on even the most challenging bariatric cases. Better-trained surgeons are more efficient in the operating room, and their patients enjoy better outcomes, shorter hospital stays, and quicker recovery times, he says.

Dr. Kirkpatrick believes training is important for the recipients of bariatric surgery, as well. Patients can expect to receive a considerable amount of dietary and fitness education in the three months leading up to surgery. “Surgery is, ultimately, the most aggressive tool for battling obesity, but it is still just a tool,” Dr. Kirkpatrick says. “This is a life-changing surgery, and there's no need to rush it. We want to make sure we're well-prepared from a safety standpoint, and we need patients to be well-educated on the diet and exercise regimen that will be required after surgery to ensure long-term success.”

While successful bariatric surgery patients lose weight and gain relief from obesity-related conditions, including Type 2 diabetes, the most eye-opening measure of success is counted in years. Dr. Kirkpatrick estimates that patients age 50 and younger who receive bariatric surgery and keep off the weight live about a decade longer on average.

Many of the patients that approach Surgery Inc. and St. John Medical Center come armed with knowledge of the process, says Dr. Kirkpatrick. But there's no better way to learn about bariatric surgery options than from the surgeon himself. Visit SurgeryInc.com to learn about Dr. Kirkpatrick's next free seminar on bariatric surgery.

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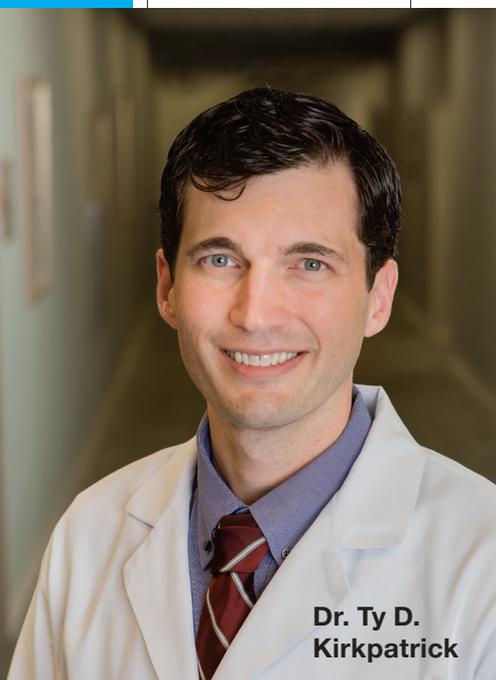
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