



# A Life-Changing Experience

Southeast Georgia Health System's J. William Tsai, M.D., FACS, gives patients a brighter future through bariatric surgery.

For many patients, bariatric surgery, also known as weight-loss surgery, is about more than just losing weight. It opens the door to a healthier future and a happier life.

"My decision to have bariatric surgery saved my life," says Felicia Williams. "I went from having chronic pain every day to enjoying my life with my family. It's been a life-changing experience."

The pastor's wife and proud matriarch attributes a sleeve gastrectomy performed by J. William Tsai, M.D., FACS, for giving her a brighter future without back spasms, sleeplessness, and mobility issues. A board-certified surgeon at Southeast Georgia Physician Associates-General & Vascular Surgery, Dr. Tsai specializes in gastric sleeve procedures using advanced, minimally invasive laparoscopic techniques and has performed hundreds of bariatric surgeries.

"I'm a mother of three adult children and four grandchildren, and I wear a lot of hats as a teacher and church leader," says Mrs. Williams, whose busy life was sidelined when a commercial truck rear-ended her vehicle in 2015. "That started my spiral of weight gain. In a short time, my weight skyrocketed to over 300 pounds."

Bedridden by back surgery, Mrs. Williams' health quickly declined as she suffered from high blood pressure,

hypertension, and chronic pain. "I was exhausted every day. I could barely sleep and woke up in pain throughout the night. Most nights I slept with a body pillow and six other pillows surrounding me.

"I tried so many diets and different treatments to manage the pain and get to the root of the issue," she continues. "I was confined to bed and couldn't walk without assistance, and that pushed me into a dark place where I thought, 'This is how my life is going to be forever.'"

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE

"Bariatric surgery is a safe, minimally invasive option for many patients," says Dr. Tsai. "Bariatric surgery reverses debilitating conditions including diabetes, heart attack, and stroke. Plus, robotic surgery allows for a shorter hospital stay and recovery." That means patients experience less pain after surgery and can resume regular activity within six short weeks.

"Almost immediately after surgery, patients experience dramatic improvements in their diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia," he explains. "The Health System's bariatric program helps patients permanently change their lives

for the better. The surgery itself is only one part of a patient's bariatric treatment plan. Patients must also be willing to make necessary lifestyle changes, such as healthy food choices and exercise."

With the help of nutritionists, support groups, and other resources, the program empowers patients with the tools they need to succeed after surgery. Plus, Kristina Clark, RN, the Health System's designated bariatric coordinator, is always available, guiding patients through every step of the program.

"Surgery alone is not the answer. I've changed my mindset and retrained my behaviors that encouraged an unhealthy relationship with food," says Mrs. Williams, who recommends Dr. Tsai and the Health System for its patient-focused approach. "I went from a place of despair and hopelessness to coaching and positively influencing others' health journeys. I never thought that would be possible. Bariatric surgery gave me the chance to have my life back."

To learn more about the Southeast Georgia Health System Bariatric Program, visit [sghs.org/bariatrics](http://sghs.org/bariatrics) or call 912-265-5125.



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